

NEW

**SOVIET ISSUE
JANUARY, 1935**



THEATRE



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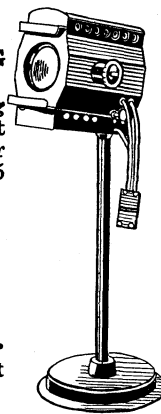
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NEW THEATRE

JANUARY, 1935

THOUGH the Soviet Union still has its enemies, all but the ignorant will grant that its Theatre is the first in the world. Every observer, whatever his politics, testifies to its high vitality. Prominent Broadway actors, playwrights, stage-directors and producers return from a five day or a month's inspection of the Soviet Theatre to make the dramatic page of the New York Times ring with clamors of praise. The houses are always sold out, they say, classics as well as contemporary play are presented, not everything is "propaganda," the audiences are eager, everybody is hard at work.

Yet when one actually visits the Soviet Theatre one is amazed to find that all the reports that have been published convey nothing of its essential significance or even, emotionally speaking, of its real thrill. The information we read is accurate enough, the critical judgments are sometimes valid, but somehow the heart of the matter has not been touched. There is something more! There is indeed one distinction to be made between the Soviet Theatre and the theatre elsewhere, and unless it is made everything one may say loses its point. The distinction resides in the fact that while everywhere in Europe and America the stage represents a mere show-shop (or at best, a museum), in the Soviet Union what actually exists is a *Theatre*—the only complete Theatre in the world today.

And what does this mean? Every play in the Soviet Union (whatever the degree of talent that has gone into its making) is the embodiment in flesh and blood of thoughts and sentiments shared by the actors, directors, scene-designers, musicians, etc., presented to an audience animated by a spirit and motives equivalent to those of the theatre-workers themselves. The actors in a Soviet Theatre are not "hired" to illustrate the words and ideas of a playwright who is foreign to them: there is a real identification of the actors with the very soul of the play-script, and they possess a technique moreover in which all are carefully and equally trained to give the playwright's idea its specific tangible form. . . . Each theatre has its own identity, its own line, its own selected means of speaking to its own audience.

THIS is the cause for the variety of the Soviet Theatre, the reason why Gorky's *Yegor Bulitchev*, for example, can be played simultaneously at two different theatres and have a different theatrical body corresponding to a different ideologic-

al significance in each theatre. . . . The masters of the Russian Theatre Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold—even before the Revolution, taught the language of the theatre, and now after the Revolution the people in the theatre-world of the Soviet Union know how to speak it. They know how to convey an idea to an audience in terms of their medium—which consists not only of the dramatist's lines, but of the whole complex of stage action and stage materials. And because theatre-people have learned to speak this language clearly and easily, the audience in turn has learned to understand it. Every theatre in the Soviet Union has something individual to offer to every one—otherwise it would cease to exist—and each theatre has in addition its own particular audience where the collaboration between stage-workers and audience is closest and deepest.

Thus the explanation for the aliveness of the Soviet Theatre is *technical*—the fruit of a perfected training—but it is also *social*. The Revolution has released the great masses of the Russian people so that it may profit from the cultural heritage of the past, and assist in the making of the cultural reality of the present. And the Revolution has given the theatre worker the most advantageous conditions—the

greatest freedom—to develop and to become truly an artist.

The result is buoyancy, gaiety, exuberance, colorfulness, an ecstatic sense of unity and a terrific impetus of progressive movement toward an ever brighter, more ardent future. The Soviet Theatre is the very opposite of the lugubrious thing that old accounts of "the Roosian stage" and "its morbid psychology" might lead us to suspect. On the contrary, nowhere in the world is the theatre so imbued with that festival spirit, that singing holiday mood that we always associate with the idea of the Theatre in our earliest recollections of it. When I spoke to Jacques Copeau in Paris about the Soviet Theatre he fairly cried out, "I shall go to the Soviet Union to revive my faith in the theatre!"

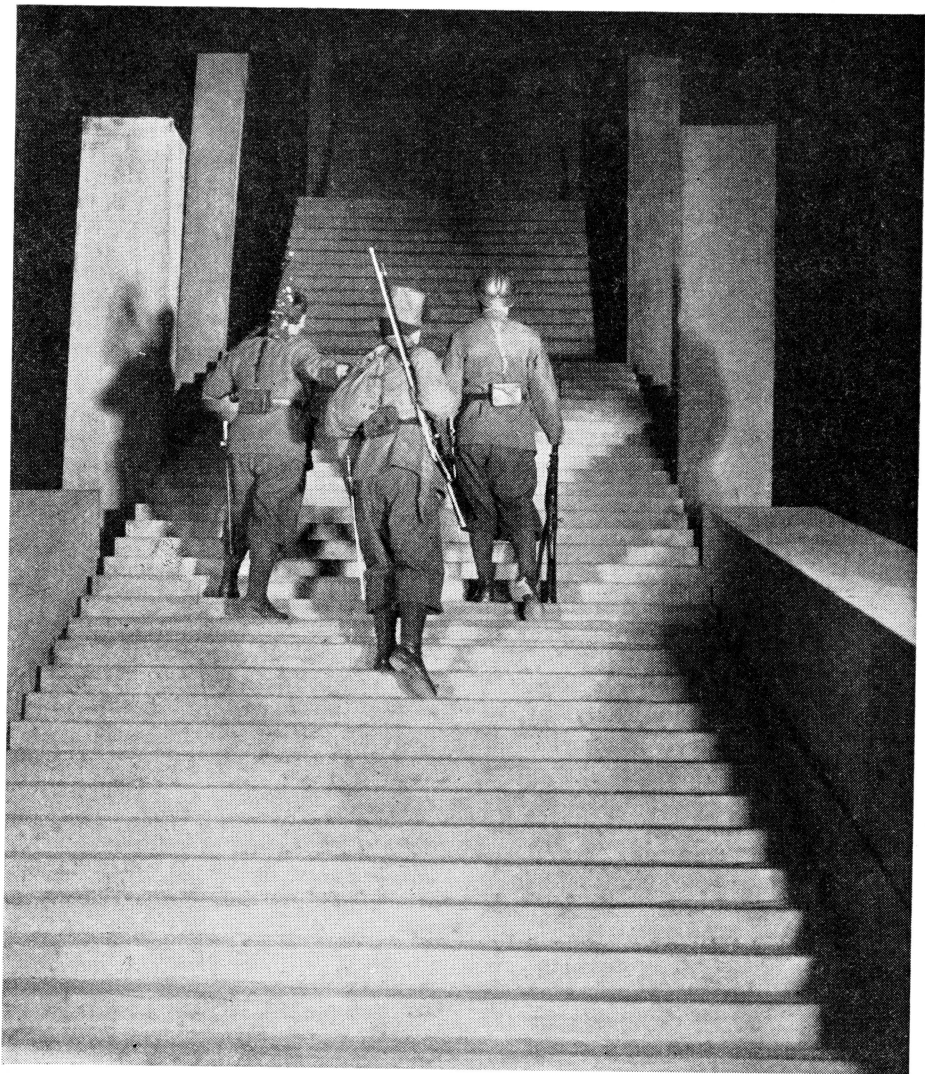
Those of us who follow the theatre and make it our special concern can learn from the Soviet Theatre its twofold lesson: in order for the Theatre wholly to flourish there must be study and work on the medium itself—technical training—and there it must form part of a healthy social organism which today can mean only one thing—the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism.

HAROLD EDGAR



From *Intervention* by L. Slavin, dir. by R. Simonoff

Vakhtangov Theatre



From **Intervention** by L. Slavin, dir. by R. Simonoff

Vakhtangov Theatre

Yesterday

Workers Theatre of Old Russia

By ANATOLI GLEBOV

THIRTY years ago there were 489,000 workers in Moscow. 120,000 of them worked in the heavy industries. Out of half a million proletarians more than 400,000 were illiterate. In addition to the most horrible conditions of work, they led an Asiatic, semi-savage existence, and needless to say, had practically no intellectual life. One of the most interesting documents of that time is a letter of seventy-five workers of the "Silk Manufacturing Co." referring to the opening of a clubhouse in the Vedenski district. "We, in our district," they wrote, "lack everything. There isn't even a place to spend the few days and evenings that we don't work. To sit a whole day in the bedroom is both tiresome and boring, and to stay outside, in front of the house, is strictly forbidden. As a result, unwillingly, people go to the saloons and winecellars. There you have everything: wine, beer, harmonica players, acrobats, prostitutes and even places for sexual relations. And after two in the morning, the prices on everything are doubled. In our district there isn't even a single park. . . ." Explaining all that, the workers beg that the authorities should not delay in building the clubhouse. But even there where such clubhouses existed, particularly in the houses that were under the patronage of the "People's Temperance Society," hooliganism and drunkenness flourished. This was particularly true of the clubhouses in Petersburg. The well known "populist" writer, I. Scheglov, who visited twenty-five Russian cities in 1903, wrote about the workers' clubhouses as follows:

"An unheard of condition! To visit twenty-five peoples' 'theatres' . . . and not see (to tell the truth) even one real one!"

The "Peoples' Theatres" described by Scheglov were indeed a rare collection of horrors, curiosities in all respects—architecturally as well as intellectually. The best classical works of world literature, for instance, were forbidden to be presented in those "Peoples' Houses."

The harsh logic of class struggle, however, forced the Russian proletariat to become conscious of its historic mission, and to become active in all fields of endeavor. The field of the theatre was not left out of its scheme of things. There is nothing strange in the fact that at the beginning of the development of the workers' theatre the class-conscious elements played a very minor role. On the contrary, it was those who were interested in diverting the workers from the revolutionary struggle who were most active in the early workers' theatre. 1903, a year of the rise of a num-

ber of fighting proletarian theatres, as well as political parties (the Bolshevik Party), also saw the rise of forces inimical to the workers. It was in that year that the workers' unions created by the chief of gendarmes, the provocateur, Zubatov, flourished most. The Zubatov unions—fore-runners of present-day fascist "workers' organizations" included not only workers but also capitalists, representatives of the clergy, police, etc. It was typical of these Zubatov provocateurs and liberal intelligentsia that they should attempt to divert the rising class energy of the proletariat into non-political cultural channels. The workers' theatre to the semi-literate and altogether illiterate masses was after all a means of achieving a "more enlightened life" and of forgetting the horrible reality of their everyday existence. This audience did not favor plays that dealt with workers' and peasants' themes. On the contrary, it was angry that even in its rare hours of rest, the theatre should deal with themes depicting their miserable life. Also, this audience did not regard with much favor the first amateurs that appeared from its midst.

The first workers' theatre circles were organized in the 80's and 90's of the past century. Usually they were organized with the help of liberal entrepreneurs who used them for their own purposes. The Tsarist bureaucracy looked with suspicion even

upon such enterprises. Thus, Savva Morozov, the famous Russian millionaire who long before Ford applied "Fordian" methods of exploitation, called his enormous theatre merely "The Sitting Room of the Cafe." It is interesting to note that in this theatre, as the billboards usually announced, "office workers and the city intelligentsia" were not permitted to attend performances given for workers. Morozov wanted, of course, to safeguard the workers from the "mad influence" of the city intelligentsia among whom there were already at that time many Bolsheviks.

THE revolutionary upheaval of 1904-1905 radically changed this condition. A new type of worker appeared on the Russian scene: a worker who had achieved intellectual maturity. The attitude of the proletariat towards the theatre changed. Class-conscious workers no longer were opposed to plays depicting the sordid life of the toilers. On the contrary, it was this type of play that they began to value. They were no longer satisfied with the talentless concoctions of third-rate dramatists. In reply to a questionnaire sent out in 1905 one worker wrote: "Young people prefer plays depicting workers' lives but they are no longer satisfied with workers' sob stories. We should like to see Hauptman's *The Weavers*. Only the older people who are still tied to the village prefer folk plays that have a moral to preach." Gorki's plays at that time were beginning to have a tremendous success. "The working-class audience is so developed that you would not recognize it," a worker of the Peoples' Theatre wrote at that time. "They go to the theatre to study life."

In 1903, under the patronage of Countess Panina, "A Theatre Accessible to Everyone" was organized. This theatre, under

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Organ of League of Workers Theatre, Film and Photo League, and Workers Dance League
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Entry as Second Class Matter Pending.

the direction of P. Gaideburovy, in the course of its thirty years of existence, did a great deal in developing in the working-class audience a taste for good plays. However, when this theatre presented a play by L. Langman, in which he depicted sympathetically leaders betraying the class interests of the workers during a strike, the working class audience, no matter how much it loved this theatre, revolted. "Every class-conscious worker will protest against this play," wrote the worker Odintsov, "for it seems that it was written purposely to discredit the leaders of the working class movement."

Then there was the incident of Feodor Chaliapin. In 1913 Russia was aroused by Chaliapin, who demonstrated his faithfulness to the Tsar by singing before him on his knees the tsarist hymn. This, however, did not stop Chaliapin from singing before workers' audiences. Perhaps he sought in this manner to appease revolutionary Russia, and wipe out his shame. But the revolutionary workers clearly understood his aim. "It is clear that you have deserted the ranks of democracy and sold yourself to those who buy your talent for money," one group of workers wrote to him. "Bourgeois greed robbed democracy of your talent. We accept it as bitter truth. Henceforth, as far as we are concerned, you will be considered among those artists who serve those who can buy everything for money."

The workers began to seek ways of *expressing themselves* in art. They began to struggle for a real workers' theatre. Alongside of the dramatic circles that were under the patronage of the bosses there began to be organized independent workers' circles. Many of them worked illegally. Others spent years trying to get a permit from the administration. In the Scherbinovski mines the circle of "workers of a higher rank" was officially approved of, whereas the circle of "lower ranks" was constantly persecuted. Quite often the police would raid such circles, arrest the members and confiscate their property. Needless to say, these circles were very poor. The majority of them did not have their own stage. Boards for a floor would be borrowed from the neighbors. All that was necessary would be collected in parts. "The audience," one wrote, "volunteers boards, costumes, tables, mirrors, lamps, dishes, etc., and sometimes they even give a helping hand in building the stage." Very often the audience would also assist the circle with money, advancing on account for tickets. Usually, having given two or three plays a circle would disperse. Nevertheless, the workers' theatre movement grew and developed. In dozens of cities and villages theatre work was carried on. After a fourteen-hour day at the loom, disregarding fatigue, the working youth would stay at rehearsals until two in the morning, sometimes going from rehearsal straight back to work. In 1913, a group interested in organizing village and factory theatres received answers from 437 cities. More than half of the answers

Our Contributors

This Special Soviet Issue was compiled in Moscow by Jay Leyda, with the assistance of Pearl Attasheva. Heinrich Diamant, president of the International Union of Revolutionary Theatre (IURT), is the editor of *International Theatre*. Anatoli Glebov, poet and dramatist, author of *Inga*, *The Necktie*, etc., has been one of the leaders of the Proletcult since 1919. Sergei Eisenstein, world-famous director of *Potemkin*, *Ten Days That Shook The World*, and *The Old and New*, plans to alternate the production of films and plays while continuing his vast educational project at the Film Institute (GIK). H. W. L. Dana is well known to our readers as an outstanding American authority on the Soviet Theatre. Sergei Tretiakov, who writes that this is his first article written especially for a foreign publication, is the author of *Roar China*, produced in New York by the Theatre Guild, and of *A Chinese Testament*. Erwin Piscator turned revolutionist while serving in the front line German trenches. Although he had won international acclaim for his brilliant productions at the Volks-Buehne, he was exiled from Germany by Hitler. He was invited to the U.S.S.R. and is working now on his second film. Leon Moussinac, authority on the theatre and cinema, and film critic of *L'Humanité*, is the director of the dynamic *Theatre d'Action Internationale* and has done pioneer work in building the workers theatres of France. Chen I-wan, theatre and dance critic, is the art director of the *Moscow Daily News*.

came from workers' circles. In the city of Petrograd there even arose a centre to coordinate the workers' theatre groups within the city.

At the same time, in Paris the emigré circle "Proletarian Culture" was organized by members of the social democratic group "Vperiod"—A. Bogdanov, A. Lunacharsky, F. Kalinin, and others. This organization which four years later became the Soviet "Proletcult" was the first one to commence an organized propaganda for class-consciousness in art and culture. The workers were ready for it. In one of the trade union magazines the worker, D. Lentsova, for instance, wrote: "The workers' theatre should be a class theatre capable of answering all questions of the proletariat. It is not necessary to create anything in the image of the bourgeoisie." Here we see alongside of class-consciousness also the roots of those Proletcult* mistakes against which Lenin struggled and which unfortunately have not yet been outlived by certain sections of the Workers' Theatres.

WHAT was the formal aspect of the workers' theatre in that period? The Petrograd literary-artistic centre formulated it thus: "The plays must be lively and understood by the workers. . . . The theatre should assist in the cultural development of the masses." This formulation, it should be understood, was meant pri-

* The Proletcult was the first cultural organization that came into existence in Russia after the Bolshevik revolution. Although it did much to emphasize the class aspect of art and culture, aesthetically its concepts were a naive vulgarization of Marxism. It encouraged, for instance, works of 'art' which had a high revolutionary temperature, but no artistic value. Such vulgarisms, unfortunately exist in America too.—Tr.

marily for tsarist censor. Its real meaning became clear in actual work in which the Bolsheviks began to play an active role utilizing for their purpose all legal institutions such as, for instance, Countess Panina's "People's Theatre." The workers' theatre was becoming more and more interested in active revolutionary struggles. On the eve of the World War this was the cause of a split in the theatre movement. A revolutionary minority came out against "above-class-art," insisting that the workers' theatre must first of all be a "weapon for social propaganda." If already in 1903, as Scheglov relates, a worker upon seeing a symbolist play came to the manager of the theatre and said: "I don't want to see such rot," is there any wonder that ten years later the workers quite consciously demanded "social dramas in which the authors try to solve the cursed problems of the workers." Even before the war then, the workers were in favor of realism in art, and what is more, of a social realism.

It was in 1917, however, that the workers' theatre began to develop with gigantic strides. The first Proletcult conference that was called that year did much to organize the movement. Unfortunately the proletcult concept of proletarian art was wrong on many basic questions. In the development of the Russian proletarian theatre the proletcult period is merely one phase, long since past. The turn of the Russian artist and intellectuals towards the working class and the socialist society, the growth of culture in the U.S.S.R., a culture that serves the interest of the proletariat made the proletcult theory of a limited proletarian art altogether superfluous. Proletarian culture in Russia today is the culture of the entire country.

Translated by LEON DENNEN

Soviet Theatre Today

By HEINRICH DIAMENT

THE nature of the typical Soviet audience can be best determined by appraising the political and cultural growth of the USSR during the period embracing the first five-year plan and the beginning of the second five-year plan. In Czarist Russia only 33 percent of the population were literate. In the USSR this figure rose to 90 percent. The population of the Soviet Union is composed of 185 different nationalities, each having a language as well as customs and traditions of its own. Every one of these nationalities—many of whom had no written language before the Revolution—needed a theatre in its own language. A new intelligentsia, comprising millions of individuals from the peasant and workers ranks, has come into being. The number of institutions of higher learning has grown to 600. The Soviet Theatre must meet the enormously increasing demands of the toiling masses.

The Theatre of Old Russia was in most respects similar to what we see in every capitalist country at present. It catered principally to a small part of the population consisting of intellectuals, middle and higher strata of officialdom and the bourgeoisie. It was practically closed to the masses of workers and peasants. Pre-revolutionary Russia had only 250 stationary theatres.

The social-economic development of the Soviet Union, the radical change in the mode of life of the masses, revolutionized the ideological base and artistic conception of the Theatre, but has also enormously increased theatrical facilities. Today the USSR has 560 professional theatres and 4687 workers theatres. The total number of actors increased from 8000—out of whom 1000 were permanently employed in Czarist Russia—to 20,500. We have now 1500 directors and 5500 others engaged in creative artistic work in the theatrical field. The great vistas opening before the Soviet theatre can be readily seen from the wide scale on which the preparation of new creative forces is carried on. The Soviet theatrical schools are attended by 26,000 students, 65 percent of whom are workers or children of workers.

The collectivization of agriculture,—bringing in its wake a new type of villager—the collective farmer, that is a man who is no longer a small individual owner but participates in socialist labor—has not only changed the economic structure of the village but tremendously stimulated its cultural development. There, as anywhere else, we see a wide demand for theatres, moving-pictures houses and art in general. In 1934 seventy-five new theatres were opened in collective and state farms.

By the end of the second five-year plan they are scheduled to have a total of 550 regular theatres. There we are faced with an entirely new kind of audience—men and women who have never before in their lives witnessed a theatrical performance. This offers an unlimited field for new creative endeavor. Enormous possibilities are opening before the artist, the playwright, the director, the actor—possibilities existing only under the Soviet system which provides the ground-work for a wide sweep of genuine artistic creation. In any other country even under most favorable economic conditions, a theatrical producer is forced to put on a play after only a few weeks preparation (2-3 or at the most 4 weeks). In the Soviet Union a play is not staged until its worth has been brought out. As much time as necessary is taken for the realization of the artistic design of a production. This is due to the fact that neither the actor, the director, nor even the manager is in the least concerned with box office receipts. This problem simply does not exist in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, particularly in the larger cities, one must wait to obtain a ticket to any one of the leading theatres. The demand for a first class, for a genuine artistic production grows at an incredibly rapid tempo. Thus, the artistic leadership of the Soviet Union is faced by a problem of tremendous magnitude for the solution of which it needs and receives the full cooperation of the Communist Party, the government and the trade-unions.

THE creation of a new theatre, the gigantic sweep of its development imperatively demand an incredible creative effort, both extensive and intensive, on the part of Soviet dramaturgy. The problem of the theatre has occupied a prominent place in the deliberation of the Congress of Soviet writers recently held in Moscow. The Soviet playwrights have not been able to cope with the great demands made on them. A new life creates new problems, new relations between parents and children, new ideas of family life. The problem of the relations between men and women appears in entirely different light. All these require an entirely new approach, a decisive change in dramaturgical treatment. The Soviet spectator comes to the theatre not merely for amusement—he wants to combine amusement with an answer to these stirring problems. In brief, the Soviet theatre is a theatre of new artistic and ideological content. The Soviet audience seeks an answer not only to current problems. It expects to find in the theatre a reflection of the past, a realistic and artistically true presentation of its own history and the history of the struggles of preceding generations for a new life. That accounts for the inclusion of a great number of classical plays in the repertory of the Soviet stage. The Soviet theatre has developed a new way of presenting classical drama—a treatment designed to reveal its true social content. The all-inclusiveness and many-sidedness of the Soviet theatre can also be seen from the great number of various plays produced during the period of only one year. In 1933 on the professional stage of only one part of the Soviet Union, the RFSSR, there were produced 16,012 plays, of which 9,096 came from the pen of contemporary Soviet playwrights, 4,114 were classical and 1,402 translations from foreign authors. This speaks volumes for the great demand for theatrical productions in the Soviet Union.

To satisfy this demand a new generation of Soviet playwrights is already coming into being, new talents are springing up. The older more experienced playwrights adapt new creative methods, improve their conception and technique and are gaining a leading place not only in Soviet but in the world dramaturgy.

The second five-year plan of Socialist construction, the new economic measures of the party and the government, show that the material and cultural status of the toiling masses in the Soviet Union is rapidly reaching a point when the theatre will occupy an increasingly prominent place in their life. The future theatre of the USSR is the theatre of a new humanity, triumphantly building a new Socialist society. *Translated by LEON RUTMAN*

Greetings!

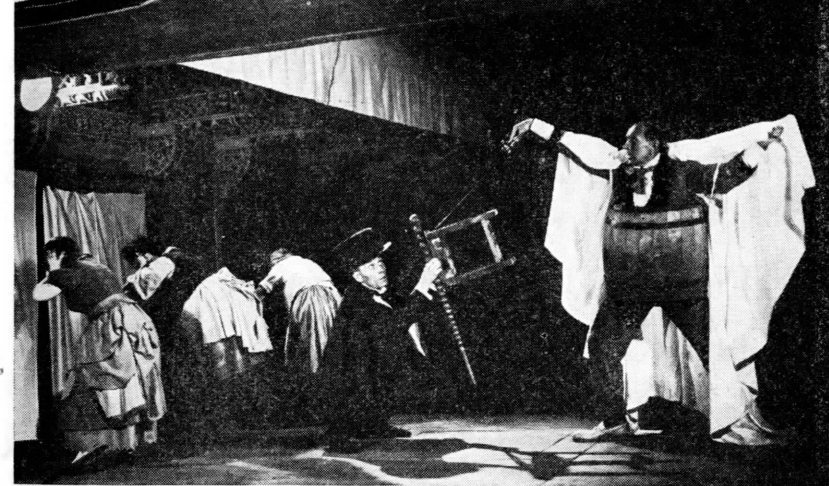
RADIOGRAM

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NLT AMERICA NEW THEATRE

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ON FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF SOVIET CINEMA EDITORIAL STAFF SOVIETSKOE KINO AND CINEMA WORKERS SEND WARM COMRADELY GREETINGS TO THE NEW THEATRE AND WORKERS CINEMA LEAGUE STOP CONGRATULATIONS ON FIRST ALL SOVIET ISSUE STOP FORWARD WITH UNITED FRONT AGAINST FASCISM AND WAR FOR REVOLUTIONARY ART YUKOFF AT-TASHEVA ANDREEVA EISENSTEIN TISSE PUDOVKIN DOVJENKO SCHUB IVENS VERTOFF.

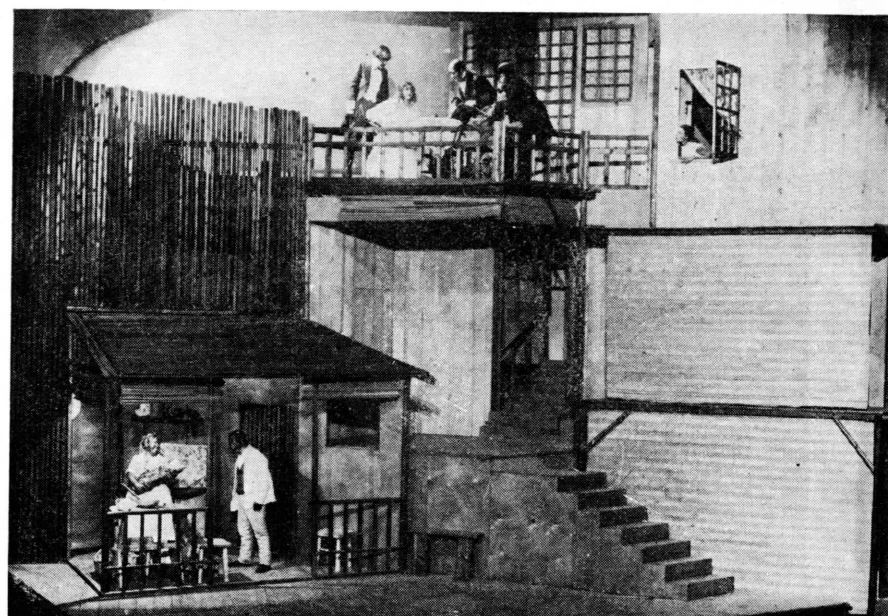


The Advocate Patlen dir. by Chetnerowich. Moscow Children's Theatre.

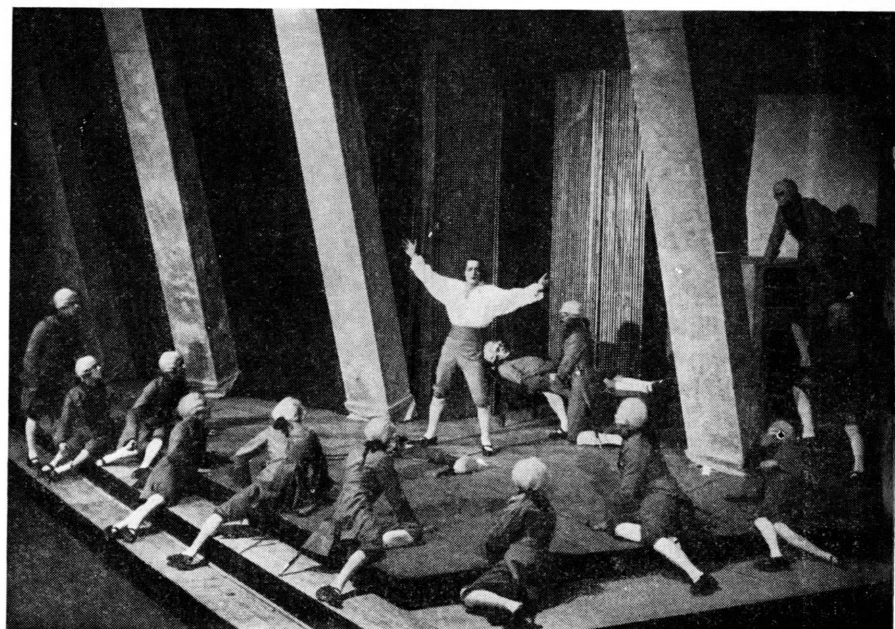
Theatre for Young Spectators

The Leningrad Theatre for Young Spectators and The Moscow Children's Theatre remind one rather of a circus than of a theatre. There is no proscenium and all the action is surrounded by actively participating young spectators.

The Tale of Czar Saltan dir. by V. Korolev. Moscow Children's Theatre.

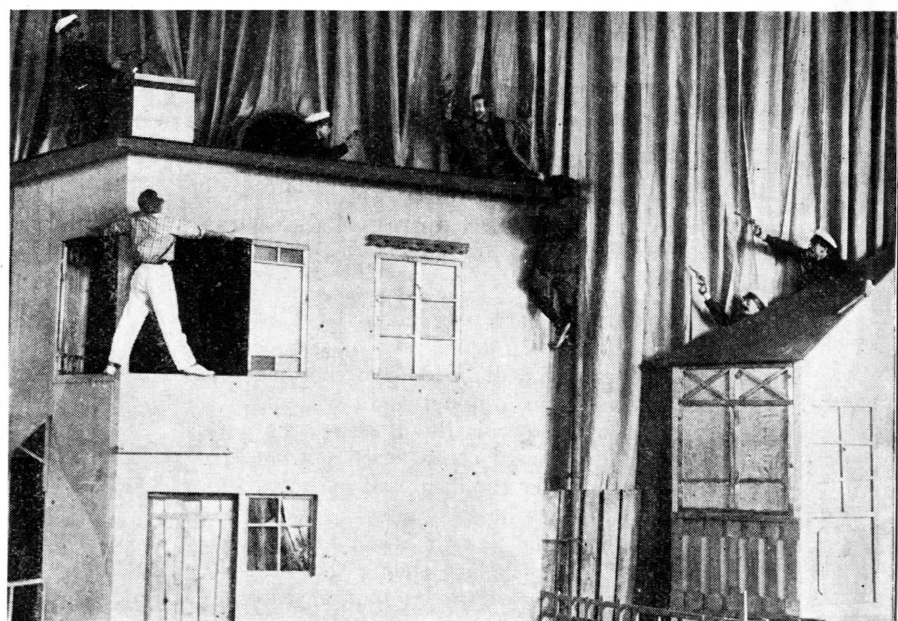


Uncle Tom's Cabin dir. by Zone. Leningrad Theatre for Young Spectators.



The Robbers by Hakkela (after Schiller) dir. by Hakkela.

Underwood by Schwartz, dir. by Briastsev and Zone.



The State Jewish Theatre

By LEON MOUSSINAC

THE Jewish State Theatre in Moscow is a theatre born of the October revolution. It was able to make the strides that it did, thanks to the policy of encouraging national cultures first formulated by Lenin and developed by Stalin: It was founded with these purposes: the popularization of dramatic values in Jewish literature, and the presentation of the new work of Jewish writers—both those who had participated in revolutionary struggle, and contemporary young writers who are closely connected with the masses in the struggle for socialist construction.

The Jewish State Theatre in Moscow, under the direction of Granovski, derived its nourishment for its first six years from the characteristic works of Jewish culture; its contribution lay in its ability to give to this revolutionary and national content a new theatrical form—actual, living, expressive, specific. And here the art of Granovski was revealed firmly controlling every element of the theatre, and especially the comedians' collective.

The influence of painters, especially of Marc Chagall was notable in these early stages. He, in collaboration with such talented artists as George Altman, Rabinovitch and Falk, had a great part in Granovski's innovations, and above all, in the experiments in rhythm carried on at that time. Chagall's work of this period served to decorate the lobby of the Moscow theatre today.

The enormous success of plays like *The Sorcerer*, 200,000, *The Voyage of Benjamin III*, lies above all in the fact that the decor gives us the original and rhythmic expression of a specifically Jewish atmosphere. The national characteristics, from the grotesque to the tragic, are all indicated with a force which no audience can escape. At one bound, the Jewish State Theatre in Moscow took its place among the outstanding Soviet theatres. Its tour of Europe in 1928, its successes in Berlin and

Paris, along with those of the Art Theatre of Stanislavsky, and Tairov's Kamerny Theatre, were real triumphs.

After Granovski left the theatre, it met inevitable difficulties along its line of action. Deprived of a personality which had firmly orientated its work and research, it had to find a more intrinsic direction—especially since the revolutionary development of the U. S. S. R. had already begun to highlight wrinkles in plays which, a few years earlier, had seemed to be drunk with youth. The great talent of Granovski had its weaknesses, too. He often did violence to the text, in recreating a scene on the stage, that is, he had a one-sided contempt for literature, which led him sometimes to warp the literary values of his scripts. Certain tableaux revealed clearly to the educated spectator a crude combining and weaving of artistic elements. Sound and motion could not always hide a lapse artfully, when there was a lapse. Even a perfect arabesque cannot conceal a gap. Again, the strict director's will behind the acting style involved the risks of regimentation, and of gradual degeneration, of the acting quality.

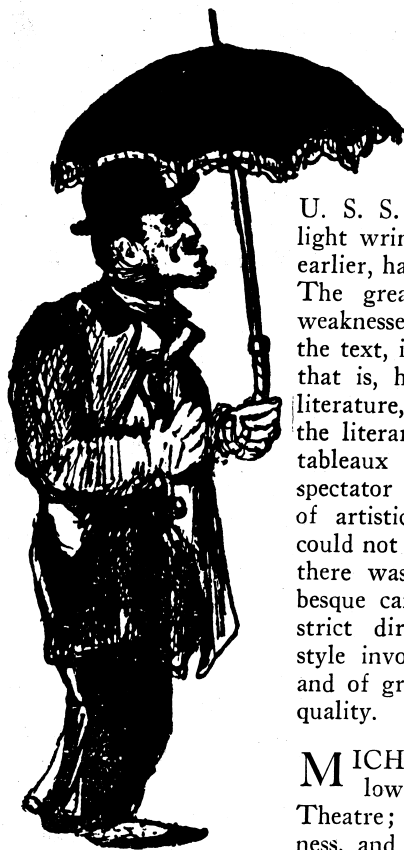
MICHOELS, that fine comedian, followed as artistic director of the Theatre; he was forced to fight this weakness, and to return to the deeper national characteristics, through which the artistic level of the theatre had to be raised, and which was the mainspring of the contemporary plays of the Jewish State Theatre. He drew on Kaverine and Radlor among the Russian designers, and they staged *The Deaf* and *King Lear*. Michoels devoted himself to producing plays with the appropriate scenic intelligence and high level of culture. But in spite of the success of his productions, he was dissatisfied. He, and with him, a great number of Jewish writers and artists, felt that the policies of the early Granovski period, even if it had been successful, needed to be broadened, that

is, that the theatre should not be consecrated any longer to exclusively Jewish works, but should give classic plays, those derived from Russian culture and the cultures of other nationalities. Granovski himself had indicated that direction in transposing the setting of Jules Romain's *La Trouhade* (The Souvenir). But last year when it was decided to put on first a French vaudeville program by Labiche, and then Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the Jewish State Theatre really entered its larger field. Along with productions that were specifically Jewish in their cultural background (and they retained all their success and prestige, established works will be presented—works chosen carefully from the wealth of international culture. This is an extremely significant advance, and conforms with the development of cultural policy in the U.S.S.R. Such a line strengthens the position of the theatres of the national minorities, and with it the Jewish State Theatre takes on a powerful and long-range perspective. But with it, it also takes on a tangle of new problems that are not only artistic, not only problems in production, but acting problems.

I have been in charge of the production of Labiche's comedy—*The Gladiator's Thirty Millions* (which was called *The Millionaire*, *The Dentist*, and *The Down-and-Out*), and there was the question of beginning a great technical task: that of making the actors' work flexible. It had been mechanized to a certain extent; and the changes made deeper research into the personality of the actors themselves necessary, made initiative of prime importance. Here was a new collaboration, and all the intrinsic meaning of the new play found a good part of its content worked out in just that collaboration. The success it had with the Soviet public proved that together we had found a first solution to the new problems presented to us; and in a few more months, *King Lear* made it clear that the theatre had gone still farther on its way.

I believe that we are on the right track here; and that we have the necessary tools to continue—and more than that: as socialist construction requires, we can enlarge this work of national and socialist education by working with the most significant plays in world culture, by creating new plays by the young Jewish writers who have found, in the Soviet Union, impetus for expressing and participating in the international movement for the liberation of national minorities who are still oppressed and terrorized.

Translated by
M. RUKYSEYER



The Millionaire, the Dentist and the Down-and-Out
(Above) Michoels as the Dentist.—Drawings by A. Labasse

The New Soviet Cinema

Entering the Fourth Period

By SERGEI EISENSTEIN

THE development of the Soviet Cinema has been proceeding by distinct five-year periods.

Having passed through three successive five-year stages, we have now entered upon the fourth period which is already rising to new unattained heights.

The rich promise of this fourth phase is indicated not alone by the fact that each succeeding phase in the development of our cinema has been marked by greater achievement than the foregoing. It is remarkable in still another aspect.

While the first five-year period of our cinematography can be defined as essentially a stage of economic stabilization, organizational shaping and the cultivation of the first offshoots of a budding Soviet cinema,—the second and third periods already constitute clearly outlined stylistic entities, each presenting a distinct phase in the development of our cinematography.

As two consecutive stages of development, they stand out in sharp opposition to each other. The fact that the third period was marked by the development of sound cinematography and the second confined to "silent" production—important though the change undoubtedly was—is nevertheless, the least significant in their distinguishing characteristics.

The main difference lies in a marked divergence of styles. A difference that sometimes amounted to absolute incompatibility and at all times revealed a sharp contradiction in basic principles.

Let us take any production of one period and place it alongside of some production of the other period. The mere juxtaposition will suffice to illustrate our point. *Mother and Deserter*, *Arsenal* and *Golden Mountains*, *Potemkin* and *Shame*.

With all the divergence of style characterizing each of these groups, they bear to an equal degree the unmistakable imprint of the one or the other five-year period.

And here we come to the particular aspect of the fourth five-year period we mentioned before—the feature that makes the present period so outstanding. This period will be marked by a synthesis, a fixed em-



From *Chapaev*, directed by G. and S. Vassiliev

Soyuzfilm

bodiment of the best achievements of the two preceding eras.

The contributions made to the history of our cinema by its second and third periods are of a widely divergent quality, reflecting the different social conditions of which they are a product.

A distinct line of demarcation is provided by the predominance of poetry in the first of these two periods and the decisive turn to prose in the second. Then there was a marked difference in compositional structure, in imagery, in the choice of media employed to produce a desired effect. It would, however, be a gross political mistake to apply to the "prosaic" period Belinski's well-known characterization of the "post-Pushkin epoch":

"... But, alas! It was not a step forward, not a revival, but an impoverishment, an exhaustion of all creative activity. . . ."

Many of those infatuated with the first five-year period and ready to belittle the achievements of the second period would quote Belinski further:

"... All vital activity ceased; the clash of arms died away; the tired fighters sheathed their swords, rested on their laurels, each claiming victory, and none having really gained it. . . ." (Belinski: *Literary Dreams*).

Such a mood should be decisively condemned. It spells narrow vision, erratic judgment, downright pessimism. But those who, on the other hand, would attach a halo of irreproachability to the second period, who would smooth over the elements of one-sidedness undeniably present in this

period, as well as in the one preceding it,—should be no less decisively rebuffed.

IF the first period, at times—in detriment to thematic depth—was able to entrance the spectator by its revolutionary thematics, by its poetic media and skill of presentation—the second period is characterized by a decisive abandonment of all elements of cinematic expressiveness, peculiar to the first. Although in part caused by incomplete mastery of sound technique, it was essentially a result of different orientation.

The "prosaic" period has brought to the fore a demand for deeper penetration into the inner problems of the individual, psychoanalytical treatment of the human material, and an integral plot, strictly confined to its story, and with greater cohesion of its component elements. "Bringing a demand" is not a rhetorical figure on my part. It is a fact that this period has not always been able to satisfy the demands it created. In this respect, its most successful production has probably been *Shame*, which stands out in the sharpest contradiction to the productions of the preceding period.

One must be either completely self-infatuated or blind not to see the one-sided limitations of both periods, on the one hand, and their valuable contribution to Soviet cultural development, on the other. Likewise one must be blind not to foresee and foretell that the succeeding period must necessarily become a stage of synthesis, permeated with the best elements of the preceding stages.

A short while ago we were able only to prophesy.

A short while ago we might not have cared to confide our prevision to print. Today we can clearly see it. Now we may freely speak about it. Today the beautiful film *Chapaev* testifies to it from the screen. What is the essence of the remarkable achievement of *Chapaev*?

It lies in the fact, that this latest product of the Soviet cinema, without losing a single one of the artistic achievements of the

(Continued on Page 21)



From *Chapaev*, directed by G. and S. Vassiliev

Soyuzfilm

Meyerhold's New Theatre

By H. W. L. DANA

THE gong rings with a hard metallic clang. It is like the beginning of a prize fight. The searchlights shift and focus on the brightly lighted ring. They're off! The fight is on! We lean forward from our seats high up in the amphitheatre and look down on what is going on below. Instead of a single combat between two boxers, we find the whole stage seething with activity. There are dramatic struggles between groups of actors, clashes between masses, between classes. Actors excitedly rush up and down inclined planes, flights of stairs, scaffoldings, constructivist towers. The stage is vertical as well as horizontal. The action is in three dimensions. The stage itself acts, shifts, changes. Revolving disks turn in one direction with outer rings circling about in the opposite direction, wheels within wheels. Platforms slowly rise and fall. Searchlights play madly round about. Moving picture projectors flash wild scenes on the walls, on the ceiling. Music, brass bands, screeching radio, drums and guns rend the air asunder. The whole great circle of spectators is caught up in the excitement. It is a circus gone mad. Yet we are given bread as well as circus. There is edification, meat, meaning, method in the madness. We are in imagination already in Meyerhold's new theatre.

Heretofore Meyerhold has never had a theatre of his own construction to work in. He has never really had an opportunity before to work out his imaginative theories fully. For years he has had to make use as best he could of the old-fashioned Zon Theatre on the Triumphal Square in Moscow and now that that is torn down to

make place for his new theatre, he is temporarily making shift under the still greater handicaps of what was the Passage Cinema Theatre. At last, when the new Meyerhold Theatre is finished, he will have a chance to carry his plans into fulfillment such as he has never had before.

When Meyerhold described to me the astounding plans for this theatre of his own choosing and his own design, his eyes fairly glistened with excitement and his shock of gray hair was tossed about, as he waved his hands to indicate the different parts of the projected auditorium. "The first principle of my new theatre," he said, "is not to separate the audience from the stage by a proscenium arch, but to have the audience surround the actors." And he stretched out both his arms as if to embrace an imaginary circular stage between them. He went on to rail against the ordinary theatre where the curtain goes up like the rolling up of a Fourth Wall to reveal the other three walls of a realistic drawing room. Meyerhold does not believe in realistic representation. He believes in what he calls "Conditionalism." As with Pavlov's conditioned reflexes, it is not necessary to have the stimulus of the actual objects. It is sufficient to have the stimulus of conditions associated with them which produce the emotions through the power of suggestion. When Meyerhold gets explaining, we need someone to explain his explanation. One thing, however, is clear: he is not afraid of the "theatre theatrical." He is not afraid of "destroying the illusion" because "there is no illusion to destroy." There is no attempt to deceive us into thinking that we are peeping through a key hole at an intimate scene

we are not supposed to see. He frankly brings the actors out into the limelight and has them do their stuff in the very midst of the audience. It is frankly stylized, artificial in the sense of being art rather than nature. The more the audience who surround this action can be caught up into its mood, the better.

TO explain the evolution of his idea of a theatre in which the spectators encircle the actors, Meyerhold proceeded to show me a series of plans of other theatres. With these, he traced, on the one hand, the line of development of his projected theatre from an ancient Greek amphitheatre, such as that at Epidaurus, where the audience surrounded in a semi-circle the central circle of action of the chorus. From this he passed to the theatres of the Renaissance, for example that designed by the Italian architect Palladio for the Olympian Academy at Vicenza, or the Elizabethan theatres, such as Shakespeare's circular Globe Theatre, where the spectators still in large measure surrounded the actors. Meyerhold pointed out a similar condition in the popular Japanese theatre of the Kabuki. He pointed out in the plans of the *Grosses Schauspielhaus* which Hans Poelzig, the German architect, built for Reinhardt in Berlin, that to some extent the same was true there. Meyerhold would carry this line of development one point further and have the whole stage engulfed in the auditorium. "This will give," Meyerhold said, "complete unification of actors and spectators."

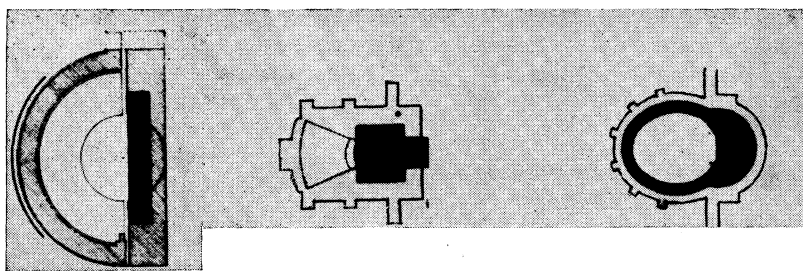
On the other hand, Meyerhold got out plans of other theatres which had departed from this line of development and brought

EVOLUTION OF MEYERHOLD THEATRE

White Area: Audience
 Black Area: Stage
 Shaded Area: Rest of Theatre

1-5: Line of development from the Greek Amphitheatre to Meyerhold: Audience surrounding actors.

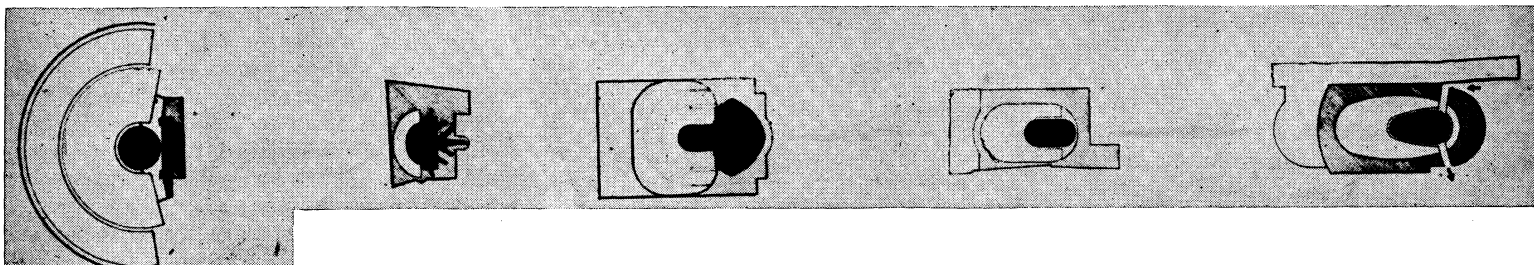
A-C: Other theatres, departing from this line of development and separating the actors from the audience.



A. Roman Theatre
 At Orange
 2nd Cent. A.D.

B. Wagner Theatre
 At Bayreuth
 1876 A.D.

C. Piscator Theatre
 At Berlin
 Plan for 1933



1. Greek Theatre
 At Eoidaurus
 4th Cent. B.C.

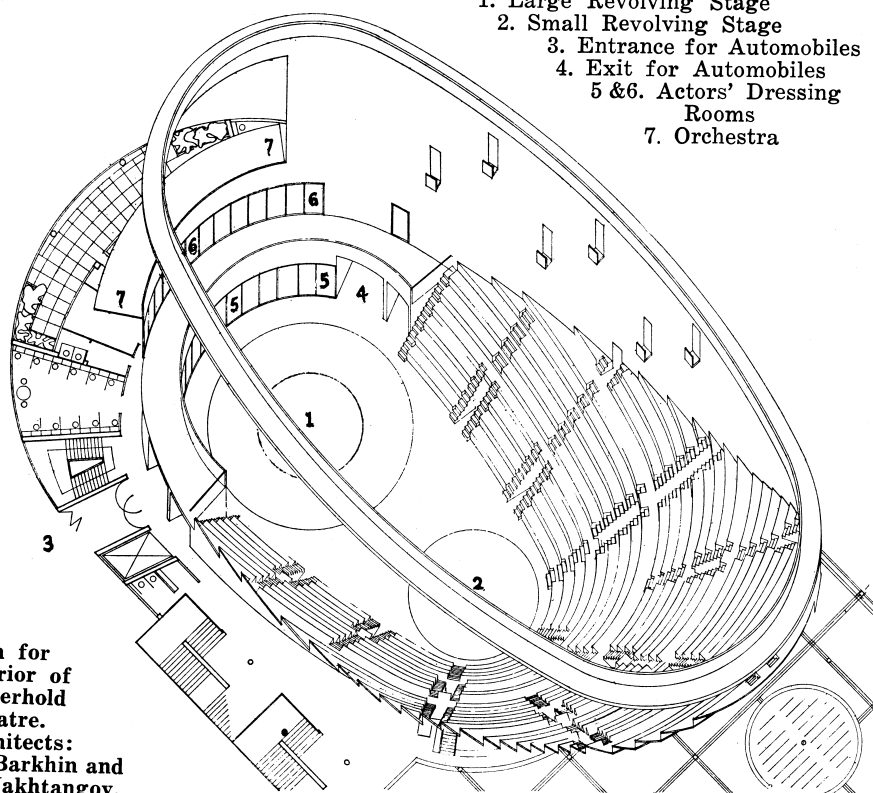
2. Italian Theatre
 At Vicenza
 1584 A.D.

3. Reinhardt Theatre
 At Berlin
 1920 A.D.

4. Meyerhold Theatre
 At Moscow
 Plan in 1930

5. Meyerhold Theatre
 At Moscow
 Plan in 1935

1. Large Revolving Stage
2. Small Revolving Stage
3. Entrance for Automobiles
4. Exit for Automobiles
- 5 & 6. Actors' Dressing Rooms
7. Orchestra



Plan for interior of Meyerhold Theatre. Architects: M. Barkhin and S. Vakhtangov.

about what he felt was a false separation of the actors from the audience. The Roman theatres differed from the Greek theatres by filling in the entire semi-circle with the spectators and forcing the actors back on a stage apart. Later theatres had increased this separation by placing the action of the stage on the other side of a proscenium arch removed from the audience by an orchestra pit, by footlights, etc. This tended to make the scene a sort of picture seen through a gilded frame. Whereas Meyerhold would keep the actors in the same hall with the spectators, the traditional nineteenth century theatre tended to place them as though in another room. In the great Festival Theatre which Gottfried Semper designed for Wagner at Bayreuth, the enormous stage, bigger even than the auditorium, is entirely detached from it. Again Piscator's daring plan for a new theatre in Berlin (which was rendered impossible by the coming of the Nazi counter-revolution) though it mingled the audience with the actors, was based on exactly the opposite principle from that of Meyerhold, having the actors surround the spectators instead of the spectators surrounding the actors.

Meyerhold next took a blunt pencil and made hasty sketches on a rough piece of paper showing how he planned a great oval which would include both audience and stage within the same circumference, but with the stage on the inside. Quickly his nervous hands drew in the circles within circles to represent the revolving stages he is planning and curving arrows to indicate the circulation by which automobiles may enter the theatre from the street, pass around the stage, and go out again to the street.

hold has had many brilliant minds to help and advise him. The sketches started by M. Barkhin have been further developed by Sergei Vakhtangov, the young son of Eugene Vakhtangov, the famous director of the Third Studio of the Moscow Art Theatre, now called the Vakhtangov Theatre. Young Vakhtangov, since the death of his father, has moved farther to the left and is now designing the sets for Meyerhold's plays and the detailed architectural plans for Meyerhold's Theatre. He showed me countless ground plans and cross-section and one isometric projection (reproduced herewith) showing a view of the auditorium of the theatre from above down. Here can be seen the steeply inclined rows of seats for the spectators surrounding the stage like a great horseshoe and rising from the level of the stage with a continuous sweep back to the very top of the theatre some five stories high.

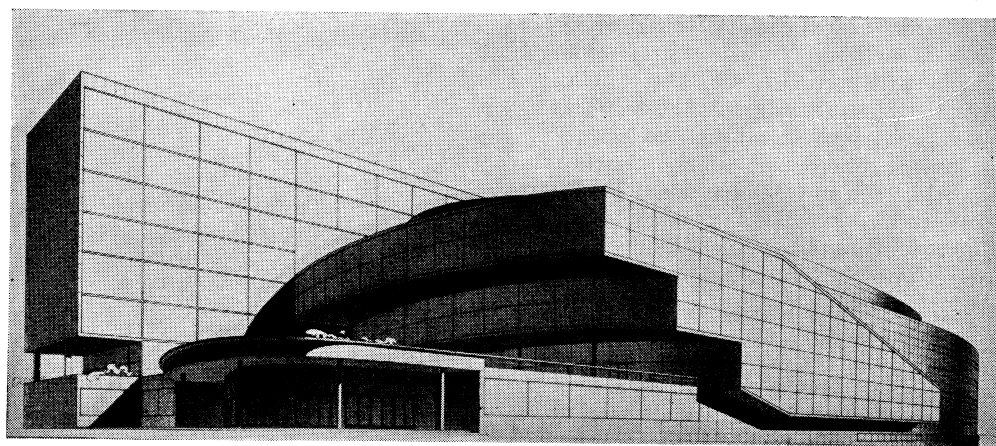
Pointing to Vakhtangov's drawing, Meyerhold explained that the egg-shaped stage would contain two revolving stages.

An earlier plan had been to have these of the same size. Now it is planned to have a difference between these two: a larger one (1) farther back, with an outer ring which can revolve in one direction while the inner circle can revolve in the other direction, and a smaller revolving disk (2) nearer the audience which can be covered with additional seats for the spectators when a more intimate play is to be produced needing only the single stage. Both of these revolving stages will be hydraulic disks like elevators so that they can be raised to different levels. If necessary the central core of the larger disk can be raised to a still higher level than the outer ring forming a sort of pyramid. This with the addition of steps and scaffoldings will enable the actors to act on a vertical as well as on a horizontal stage.

THESE revolving stages can be lowered into the basement where new sets can be wheeled unto them, and then lifted back into place. If necessary the wells into which these disks sink when lowered can be filled with water to produce sea effects such as Meyerhold has already given us with the use of real water in *Roar China*. Far better than a painted ship upon a painted ocean on a back drop is the feel of the real metal structure of a ship and the feel of real water. Meyerhold defeats realism by reality.

Then Meyerhold showed me with great glee on the plan the place (3) where automobiles will be able to enter the theatre directly from the street, circle around the outer edge of the stage, leave their passengers opposite their seats, and then pass around and out again through another exit (6) onto the street. I found myself looking at the mad master with astonished incredulity, expecting to see that he was winking at me mischievously to see how much of his fairy story I would believe. But, no! There he stood entirely in earnest.

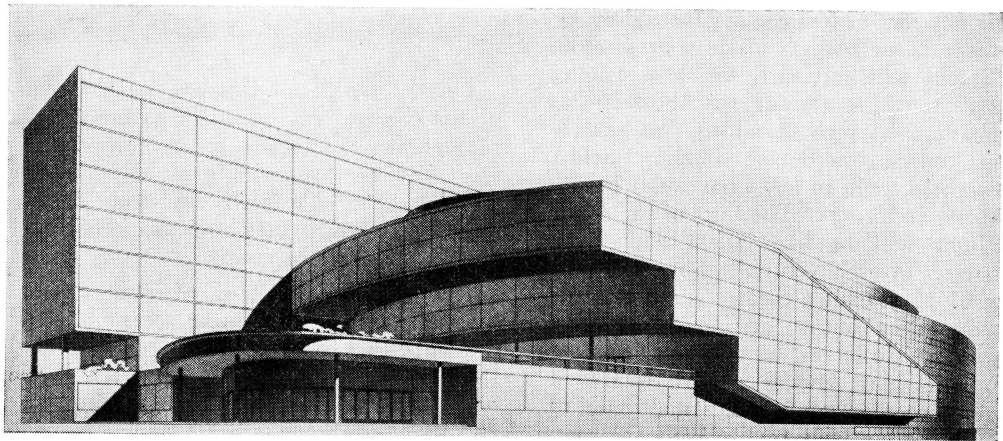
Carried away by his enthusiasm he went still further. "On holidays," he said, "when there are parades in the streets, the processions can be diverted, enter the theatre, march around the stage, waving their banners and singing, and then pass on toward



Project for exterior of Meyerhold Theatre.

Architects: M. Barkhin, S. Vakhtangov.

As architects for his new plan, Meyer-



Project for exterior of Meyerhold Theatre.

Architects: M. Barkhin, S. Vakhtangov.

the Red Square." Thus Meyerhold's Theatre is not to be aloof from the stream of popular life but is to be caught up in the public demonstrations and to be made an integral part of the civic life of the Workers' Republic.

If the spectators are to surround the stage on three sides, the fourth side is to be for the actors' dressing rooms. Instead of having these tucked away, inaccessible and out of sight, there will be two rows of little rooms, like the compartments in a European sleeping-wagon. The lower of these curving rows (5) will give access directly unto the stage in plain sight of the audience. The upper row (6) will bring the actors out unto a gallery in back of the stage, from which they can readily descend to the level of the stage itself. In these railroad sleeping compartments the actors, after their strenuous activities on Meyerhold's stage, can lie down and rest within hearing of what is going on on the stage, keeping in touch with the rhythm of the play as it progresses, ready to emerge again at the proper psychological moment. And so "they have their exits and their entrances."

Above these two galleries of dressing rooms will be a third gallery for the orchestra (7), again in plain view of the audience. Not rising from some sunken orchestra pit, but blazing forth from the curved sounding-board of the wall of the auditorium, the orchestra will play a prominent, a predominant part in many of Meyerhold's projected performances. He is planning a number of plays in verse on the collective farm, homeless waifs, etc., and in these, musical elements will be essential. Pushkin's original text of *Boris Godunov* in play form with Mussorgski's music as a background will at last be possible. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has from the first been Meyerhold's ambition, but as he said: "Only the new building will make it possible to produce the greatest masterpiece of the world dramatist."

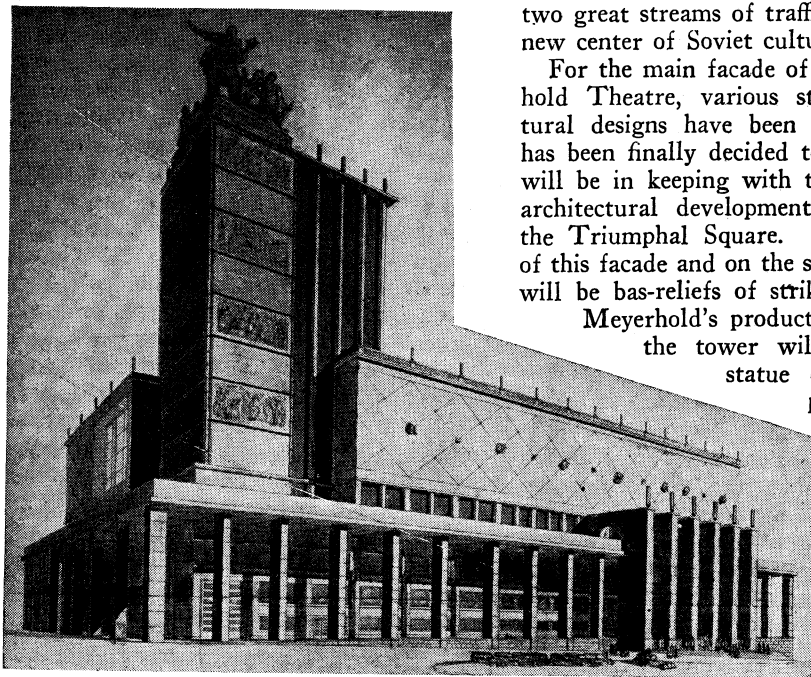
Above the music will be the light. "Light," according to Meyerhold, "should be used like music." Accordingly, still higher up, above the orchestra, and from points all around the great oval at the top of the theatre will come searchlights, playing down at various angles on the stage below. In other words, the stage lighting will not be concealed in footlights, or tormentors, or borders inside a proscenium arch; but will be clearly visible streaming down from the top of the theatre—"as dramatic," Meyerhold added, "as searchlights on an aeroplane landing field." Meyerhold seems to feel a particular beauty in these, declaring: "The lines of the shafts of light will be like pillars and flying buttresses in architecture." Since the purpose of Meyerhold's theatre is not realistic representation but suggestion through the power of association, he does not feel that the lights must change only to represent evening coming on or an actual flash of lightning. He feels free to have the spotlights change and play about at will. Act-

ors can deliberately move into a special shaft of light to produce a special effect. The use of colored light, again, can cause a changing appearance on the sets and actors below. As Meyerhold said: "Like the changes in music the lights will change to indicate changes in the mood of the play."

In addition to the rays from these floodlights and spotlights, there will also be the rays coming from the various moving picture projectors which Meyerhold will have stationed at various points about the theatre. Meyerhold has always been interested in combining the film with the stage. In his new theatre, the cinema will play upon screens at the back of the stage, curtains on the walls of the theatre, and even on the ceiling.

RADIO as well as cinema will be included in this all-inclusive theatre and broadcasts from high up in the auditorium will resound through the hall, linking up Meyerhold's Theatre again with the outside world of the Soviet Union.

Along an oval track running around the top of the auditorium, will be cranes and derricks in plain sight of the audience, with machinery arranged to lift and shift mechanical structures on the stage below.



Facade for the New Meyerhold Theatre. Architect: A. V. Shchusev.

On the top of all this, on the flat roof of the theatre will be a sun parlor and a roof garden with space for recreation and sport and for the training of Meyerhold's actors in that "Bio-mechanics" and "Socio-mechanics" which play such an important part in their art of acting.

Refreshments can be wheeled in on moveable buffets so as to be accessible. In the entr'actes the audience can wander through the spacious foyers on each level where they will find photographs and models of Meyerhold's other productions and special exhibitions arranged in connection

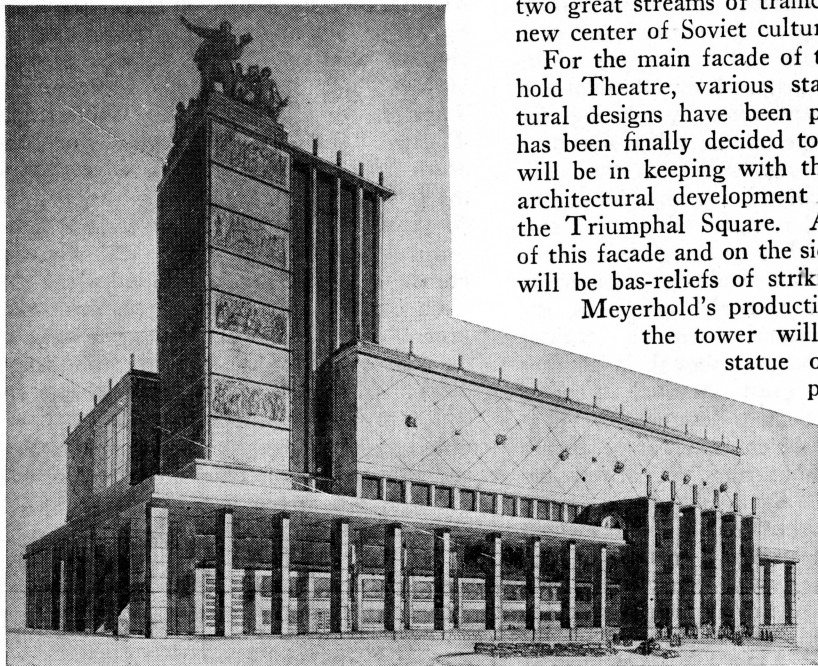
with the play that is being enacted. There, too, they will find a museum, library, book-stalls, and a restaurant. Or, if they prefer, they can wander onto the stage in the center of the audience. There buffet-wagons will be wheeled out to provide sandwiches and drinks. Indeed those who prefer to stay and retain their seats between the acts will find what would otherwise be the bareness of the empty stage, relieved by the colorful picture of the audience circulating there. On occasions special comic intermezzos will be prepared to entertain the audience during the intervals of the main drama, as was often done in the great period of Spanish drama. Thus there will really be no break in the movement and life of the theatre. "A series of transitions will bind the whole together," Meyerhold said, "as in the different parts of a Beethoven symphony."

THE new theatre which is now being built for Meyerhold, will stand where his old theatre did on the Triumphal Square at the crossing point of two of the main thoroughfares of Moscow, the Sadovaya or Garden Boulevard encircling the inner city, and the Tverskaya, or as it has been renamed Gorki Street, leading towards the Red Square and the Kremlin in the center of the city. At the intersection of these two great streams of traffic will stand this new center of Soviet culture.

For the main facade of the new Meyerhold Theatre, various startling architectural designs have been proposed, but it has been finally decided to adopt one that will be in keeping with the plans for the architectural development of the rest of the Triumphal Square. Along the walls of this facade and on the sides of the tower will be bas-reliefs of striking scenes from Meyerhold's productions. On top of the tower will be a colossal statue of the Futurist poet, Mayakovski, who used to lift his giant figure above the crowd, roaring to the marching workers his loud-throated songs of revolution.

It was Mayakovski whose strange, poetic, cosmic *Mystery-Bouffe* was the first play produced by Meyerhold after the Russian Revolution. It was Mayakovski whose extraordinary dramas, *The Baths* and *The Bed Bug*, later on gave Meyerhold's Theatre a new lease of life. When Meyerhold and Mayakovski got together sparks flew and startling drama came into existence.

Such are the astounding plans for the new theatre now being built by Meyerhold for the Revolutionary Drama of Revolutionary Russia.



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Facade for the New Meyerhold Theatre. Architect: A. V. Shchusev.

An Epic of the Ether

By SERGEI TRETIAKOV

MOSCOW, November seventh: It is early morning. Streets converging on the center of the city present an unusual appearance. Tanks and armored cars all head towards Red Square. Small bands of marchers move in different directions, each headed by a standard bearer—little streamlets later to merge into one mighty flow.

For the sixth time I find myself passing the same streets about the same time. For the sixth time I cross the Red Square amidst a steady flow of incoming troop detachments. Every now and then I see a Red Army man draw a brush from his pocket and, ducking behind the long military coats of his comrades, remove specks of dirt from his polished boots or otherwise restore the spotless neatness of his appearance. I mount the steps of a building running along the border of the Red Square in line with the Kremlin wall. From a window, directly facing the Mausoleum, can be seen, extending from both sides of the red flight of stairs like gigantic airplane wings, concrete reviewing stands.

The microphone at the window is already surrounded by a group of writers. Here are the poets Aseyev and Kirsanov whose verses are being sung throughout the land by Red cavalry men, pioneers, sportsmen. An air of intense concentration is written on the features of the French novelist Paul Nizan. He stands in the very same spot where a year ago stood Leon Moussinac and two years ago Paul Vaillant-Couturier. A little further can be seen the round gray head of Theodore Plivier.

Today marks my sixth successive participation in the radio broadcasts of the Writers' Brigade, which for the last three years has transmitted through the ether the May and October celebrations.

I have a vivid recollection of how helpless we felt at the time of our first broadcast. From beginning to end our broadcast was pure improvisation. The voice came in impetuous rushes punctuated with a sort of timid indecision. But the technique of radio requires that every word from the lips of the broadcaster be a "finished product." One cannot compose a sentence with the writer's ease and, if it does not ring quite true, leisurely draw a line through it and make the necessary corrections.

AND all the while, before your very eyes, extremely interesting events simultaneously take place on the square. Snappy greeting from the Red Army men crisply resound in the air as their commanders review the perfectly formed ranks. A sudden movement in the brilliantly uniformed throng of foreign military attachés. A burst of applause from one of the reviewing stands greeting a column of Austrian

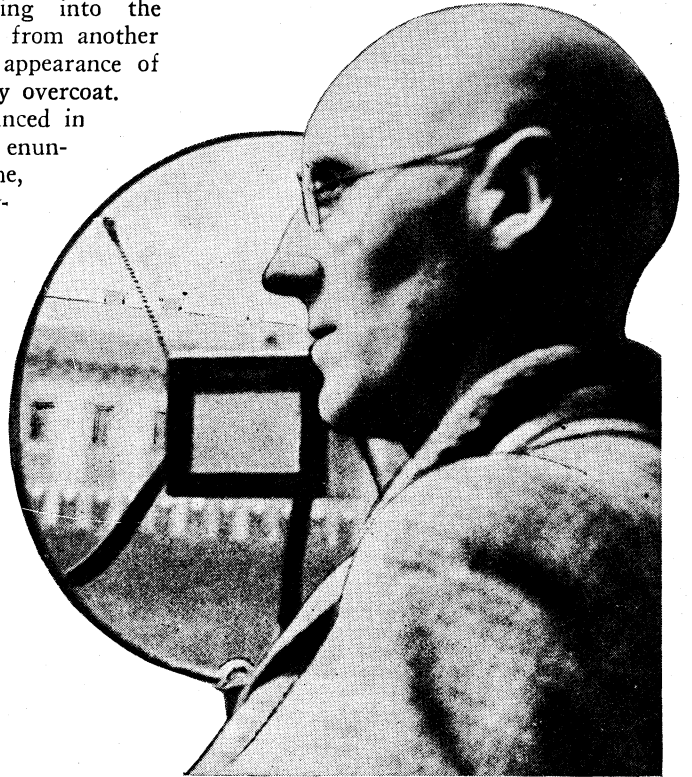
Schutzbunders just marching into the Square. A storm of cheers from another reviewing stand greets the appearance of Stalin in his long Red Army overcoat. All of this has to be announced in short, comprehensive, clearly enunciated sentences. And time, as represented by the inexorable movement of the gold hand on the Spasski Tower clock, does not wait. The decorations of the Red Square and other Moscow squares have to be described. Foreign comrades are impatiently waiting for the microphone. Phone calls come in from writers' brigades covering other points in the Moscow celebration waiting their chance to tell of interesting doings and colorful processions. On the radio Leningrad, Kiev, Gorky, Kazan and the faraway Irkutsk are clamoring for their chance to be in on the national broadcast.

Pieced together from the rumblings of the Moscow squares, the heavy tread of the infantry, birdlike voices of the Pioneers, clatter of the tanks, verses of the poets, words of the leaders—perfected from celebration to celebration—an unique epic recital was thus being recreated in the ether.

Each successive celebration brought its own contribution. Imagine our enthusiasm when the poet Aseyev, reciting a strophe while the orchestra played a march under our window, accidentally fell into the rhythm of the music! Thus was inaugurated our transmission genre—the "marching verse." On another occasion the young Comsomol essayist Goldberg conversed with a young girl Pioneer, who was speaking into a microphone, mounted in a collective farm field. The conversation turned out to be so replete with mirth, humorous innuendos and fresh youthful naivete as to greatly interest our radio audience. Thus we were equipped with a new radio genre—the "microphone chat."

From a mere recital of events taking place before our eyes, relieved from time to time by a vignette of poetic stanzas,—our celebration broadcasting has already developed into a kind of literary montage—highly original in form and of unmistakable epic content—carried out by collective endeavor from many points and with subject matter coordinated by a unified score.

NOW we commence our preparations long before the celebration date. We determine beforehand what particular as-



S. Tretiakov Broadcasting the Nov. 7, 1934 Celebration at Moscow

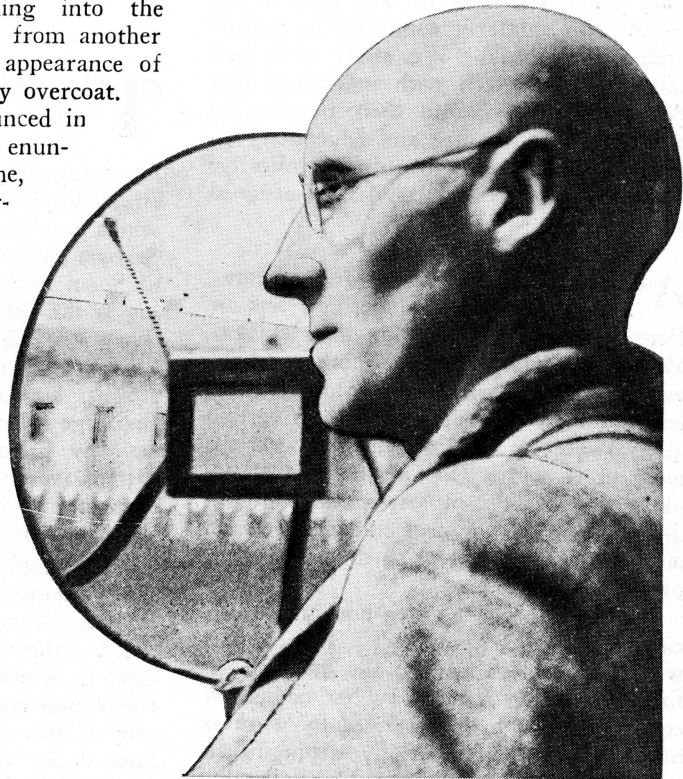
pect of the coming celebrations needs special emphasis. Each half year brings to the fore specific events and people. These have to feature prominently in our broadcast.

Thus, we brought to the microphone the heroes of the Cheluskin—remarkable shock brigaders, outstanding scientists. We also put rank-and-filers before the microphone. This year, for instance, we had an old worker whose five children are a typical example of the new Soviet intelligentsia now in process of creation. They all came to the higher institutions of learning from the lathes of the very same plant where their father is working. The oldest son, who is at the head of a Red Army detachment at Kiev, happened to be listening in on his father's broadcast. Taking advantage of a broadcast that was simultaneously going on in Kiev, he managed to send greetings to his father. There are many other similar examples.

From these accidental contacts came the idea of uniting by radio intercommunication the public squares in various cities where celebrations are taking place. This gives people in different localities of the Soviet Union the opportunity to engage in direct conversation through the ether.

One of the most important problems is to provide a social analysis of the great mass of humanity passing in parade before us. In this seemingly homogenous mass one has to be able to distinguish the various outstanding achievements of the past year

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S. Tretiakov Broadcasting the Nov. 7, 1934
Celebration at Moscow

as well as the creative ideas contributing to the development of proletarian culture during the same period. For this purpose we engage in preliminary study of the industrial plants in scores of Moscow districts scheduled to pass through the square. Military units scheduled to take part in the parade are similarly subjected to intense preliminary study. We study each battalion, get in touch with individual Red Army men; delve into their progress in political study, culture and education; investigate their record in assisting collective farms and various other civil tasks assigned to them.

AS the day of celebration draws nearer, a period of feverish activity sets in. Poets are busily at work on their stanzas. Writers are cudgelling their brains to devise an arrangement of the information to be imported. Districts as well as certain general subjects are assigned to the various announcers. One, for instance, is scheduled to speak on scientists; another on children; a third on physical culture; a fourth on collective farms; a fifth on current projects, etc.

Let me give you an idea how the broadcast is actually conducted. The writer, who is at the moment at the microphone, fixes his eye on inflated rubber models of collective farm houses, carried by workers of a plant which especially distinguished itself in supplying the needs of collective farmers. The announcer tells of the achievements of this plant. He emphasizes the achievements of the enthusiastic shock-brigade electrician who by dint of hard work and perseverance succeeded in the electrification of fourteen collective farms during the past five months. Then follows a humorous stanza, recited by one of the poets. After that a pause to give our audience a chance to hear the distant rumble, the slogans shouted from the reviewing stands, the joyous rejoinders of the passing columns.

Now a gigantic parachute appears over the heads of the crowd. It is pulled by the workers of a plant which is particularly distinguished by a great number of young parachute-jumpers. The announcer tells about the achievements of this plant and recites a poem on Nina Kamenyeva who holds a world's record in parachute jumping. Nina Kamenyeva is now the most popular person among the Soviet youth. Everybody is anxious to hear her voice, but she happens to be in the Caucasus right now. However we have had her statement recorded. So the announcer introduces Comrade Nina. The central studio instantly switches in the previously recorded speech.

For one of the coming celebrations we schedule the introduction of a speech by Lenin recorded on a phonograph record. Experts are now engaged in improving this record which unfortunately was produced by imperfect acoustic methods.

A few words about the "scenery" of the

(Continued on Page 26)

A Theatre Director in Soviet Cinema

By ERWIN PISCATOR

THE *Revolt of the Fishermen* has just made its first appearance in the movie houses of Moscow. The film, as you know, is based upon the beautiful, deeply-felt story by Anna Seghers, which won the Kleist Prize in 1928. Anna Seghers gathered her material on the coasts of Spain and Brittany, where sardine fishing is the fisherfolk's means of livelihood. They struggle not only against the harshness of nature and the wildness of the storms, but also against the rapacity of the large fisheries which have the power to set any price they wish for the catch. Often, it seems better to throw the fish back into the sea rather than let it get into the hands of those human sharks.

The people of Seghers' novel do not emerge quite fully from their background; they are drawn with deep and tender feeling, but their lives remain cloaked in a half light in which you are made to feel their ruggedness and the pressure and the monotony of their existence, but not the economic laws under which they live. And therefore, although Comrade Seghers' tale is a masterpiece of story telling, I have nevertheless felt that I could allow myself certain changes in transposing the material into a different art form—that of the talking film.

I did not think either that I should emphasize the Brittany locale. (This turned out to be a mistake, for the country around Odessa where the story was filmed very appropriately recreates the same physical conditions). Rather, there floated before my mind the memory of the German North Sea fishermen, who must likewise struggle for their existence against the exploitation of the trustified, monopolistic shipping companies, and which I knew so much better. But in bringing this tale, laid in a farther country, nearer to our own shores, I found, because of the different political and natural conditions, that I had to bring the characters out of the half light of Seghers' novel more sharply and to deal more fully with their economic conditions.

Socialist realism is a subject much discussed today. I believe that our methods of work in the production of this film brought us closer to that goal. There were slips, of course. This was my first film. I had worked only in the theatre before that; and I had to learn the possibilities of this new medium. The first problem was to reorientate myself to the shorter running time of the film—to a limit of an hour and forty minutes. My first execution was too broad; in large, separate, parallel episodes, I had sought to construct an epic whole which took shape only slowly

and became grippingly dramatic only at its highest point. As every part was dependent upon the others I found, when I had to cut, that much that was important to the whole had to be left out, and a part of the film's effectiveness was also lost.

IT would lead us too far to describe the whole lengthy, arduous task of production, although that would be of great artistic and theoretical importance. This much I may state, however: As theatre worker I had always looked upon the film as an art form which, more than the theatre, possessed an epic character. Within the theatre I had already left behind me the old, narrow dramatic forms, and I had turned to a broader method—epic and expository—which seemed to me much more adequate to our political needs. However, I suddenly discovered while I worked on this film, that it would permit even less than the theatre of the use of too broad material. You cannot employ in the film all those accessory means that I had introduced on the stage as an adjunct to the actor: the movies, as active or descriptive element, or as so-called "living back-drop," the chorus, the loud-speaker, etc. In the two-dimensional film, in spite of close-ups and long shots, you cannot get beyond the picture on the screen. In fact, the addition of sound has even narrowed rather than enlarged the possibilities of the picture. Dialogue does not allow quick changing or simultaneous montage as in the days of the silent film; it has forced upon the film a more strictly logical development, in the treatment of the whole as well as of individual parts and of peripheral plots. But in spite of many errors and misunderstandings I believe that I have also achieved certain formal results in the quest for a method appropriate to the talking film.

I also believe that what changes I have made in the novel arose not arbitrarily but out of political need. In fact this consideration was my point of departure for every change that I made. This was also Comrade Fritz Heckert's view as he pointed out recently at a meeting of comrades from foreign countries—writers, artists, workers. He pointed out that today, in the very locality of Seghers' novel, in the neighborhood of San Sebastian in Spain a revolutionary uprising of tremendous scope was taking place. Here, the film had been prophetic of the future, because of its clear political understanding and application of the Marxian method.

Translated by LEON ALEXANDER

Animated Films

CLAUDE BRAGDON, writes on the animated cartoon in Scribner's of July:

"... its possibilities, far from being exhausted, except on the technical side have scarcely been explored at all."

"... it is high time that some one in authority should perceive the possibilities of this marvelous and practically unused new medium and emancipate it from the narrow groove in which it happened to start and the one in which it has been running ever since. There are a thousand other directions in which it might as easily ramify—toward (1) *knowledge*, toward (2) *beauty*, toward (3) *social satire*, (4) *symbol* and (5) *allegory* or (6) *pure imaginative fantasy*. . . . But the only use which has been made of this medium thus far is as a vehicle for slap-stick comedy."

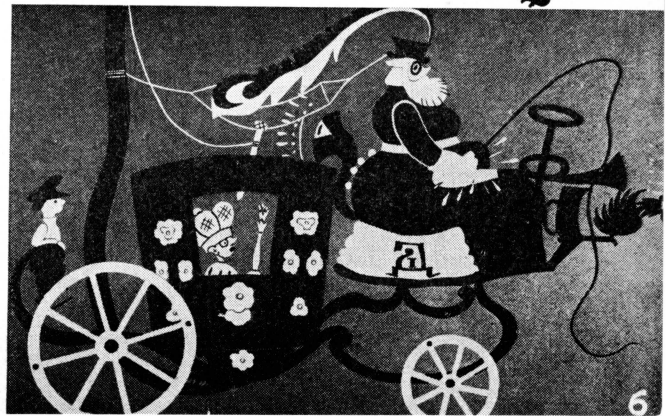
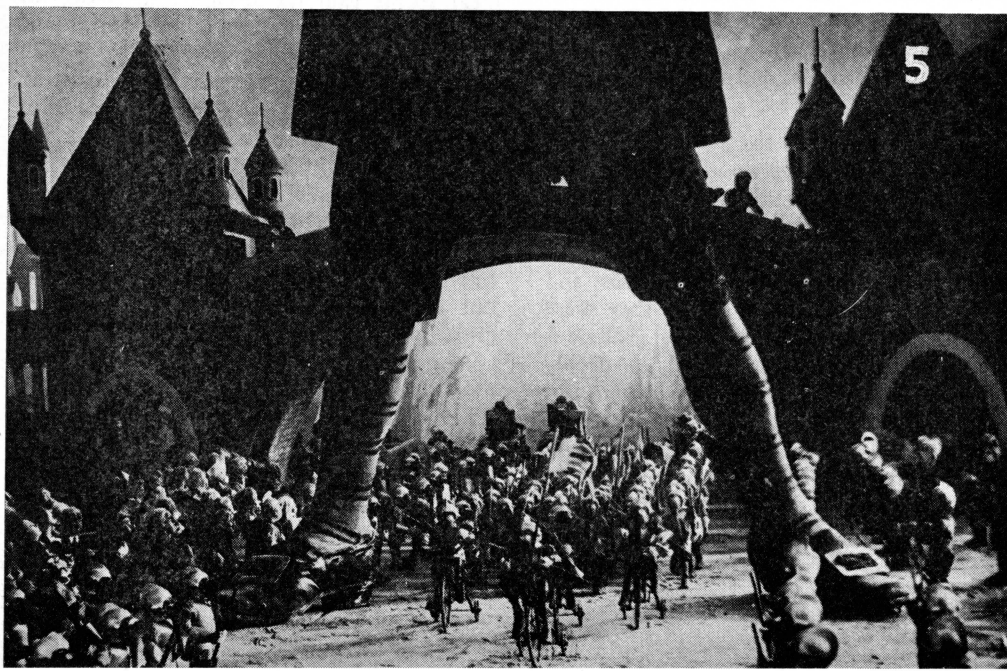
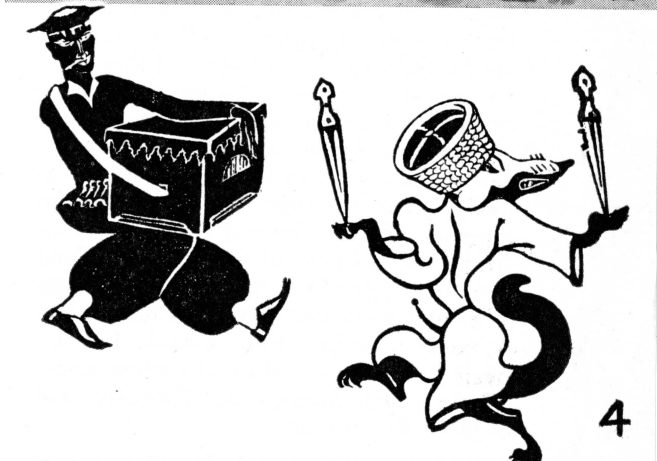
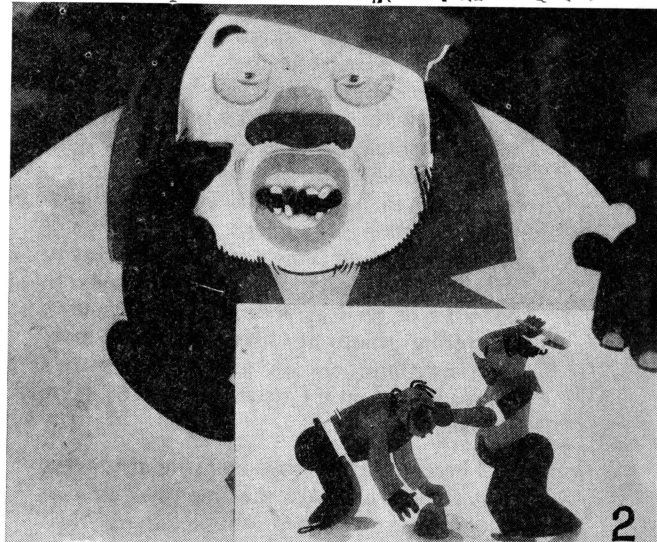
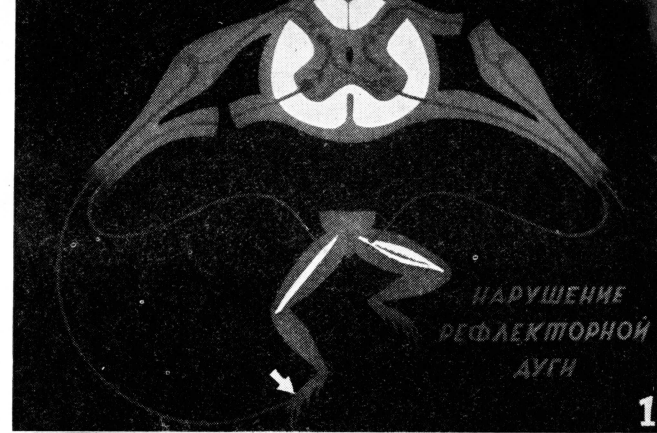
Only lack of information excuses Mr. Bragdon for having excluded the Soviet animated cartoon from his generalizations above, which are painfully accurate, particularly when contrasted to the breadth and depth of work done in this field in the Soviet Union. Out of the thousand ramifications, we have chosen only those six which Mr. Bragdon wants most to see. (See illustrations)

AT the risk of pointing out the obvious, we want to make sure that no one, least of all Mr. Bragdon, imagines that the difference between the narrow path of the American animated cartoon and the breadth of the Soviet animation can be explained by a difference in talent. Not at all. Mr. Bragdon's respect for Walt Disney's great talent and his pity for Disney's forced limitations is far surpassed by the enormous respect that all Soviet workers in this field have for a master whom they would gladly welcome and to whom they would give Soviet freedom. They have set themselves the goal of Disney's high standard of accomplishment, but, as you can see by this page, they make no attempt to copy his subject matter or technique.

An Experimental Studio under the direction of Victor Smirnov has introduced several American methods, such as the belt system and the use of celluloid instead of paper, and is establishing efficiency in production. Out of this collaboration between the Experimental Studio and the animation producing companies will come not bad nor even good imitations of Disney, Fleischer, etc., but greater freedom in image and sound along the main line already laid out by such artists as Tsekhanovski in *Mail*, Vano in *Black and White*, Putschko and Khodatayev. Add to these, the fresh ideas and untouched material of national minorities animation production, as in the Georgian *In the Sun* and we can show a very bright future for the Soviet animated cartoon to the discouraged Mr. Bragdon.

J. L.

(1) *The Nervous System* by Dr. Galkin. (2) *A Tale of a Priest* by Telkhanovski. (3) *The Crusade* by Antonovski. (4) *In The Sun* by Mujira and Toburidze. (5) *A New Gulliver* by Putschko. (6) *The Tale of Tsar Duranda* by Kurse.



A New Generation

By MARIE SETON

RECENTLY I spent a week in Odessa attending Eisenstein's scenario consultations at the Komsomol Film Studio, which produces pictures for pioneers and komsomols. Since being there, I've come to the conclusion that cinema going should really be the last stage instead of the first in the study of the Soviet cinema. Finished pictures don't always tell the spectator just how much honest hard work has gone into their composition, and in the case of the Soviet film, how much collective work. And simply interviewing the great Soviet directors has its dangers. They all express themselves so fluently that it seems that there can be nothing in the Soviet cinema either beyond or more important than their experience in it. Many of them unwittingly make one forget that a new generation is already working which is as yet not half so articulate as they are.

Eisenstein is an exception. Perhaps because he is a born teacher. He learns as he teaches. Some time ago he said to me that he felt that perhaps his most important work was to give the next generation of cinema workers the best of his knowledge; in return as he explained it 'for the materialism they have given me'. There is no doubt that working with the students of the State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow as well as acting as consultant to the young groups at Odessa, has done more than anything else in assisting Eisenstein to readjust himself after his return from abroad.

There are five groups working at Odessa, several of which are making their first or second film. Instead of explaining their theories they are trying to find a way to express them in practice. The scenarios are for children of every age, and they cover an enormous range of subjects—from a cartoon picture by Marshak for children of the first grade, a modern version of Uetroushka—to a thrilling story by an ex-"wild boy of the road," Pantelayev, about a peasant boy who invents a new aeroplane and becomes a hero of aviation, and about the effect upon his mother's psychology. The most important picture in preparation is based upon Lev Kassil's book, *Conduit* which recounts the history of a school under Tsarism and during the February and October Revolutions.

Odessa is an ideal place for young artists to begin work, there is elbow room and far more leisure than there is to be found in Leningrad and Moscow. Often the groups spend weeks together in a villa a few miles outside Odessa so that during the preparation of the scenario the regisseur, assistants, cameramen and actors can contribute their ideas to the script. Then, script in hand, the groups discuss the scenario with the studio director and the cell of the Com-

munist Party. After their suggestions have been made, Eisenstein's advice is sought on questions of form and the strengthening of content.

THESE consultations are of the most informal nature,—they take place anywhere,—in the villa outside Odessa, in Eisenstein's room in the local hotel or in the garden of the studio,—attached to a magnificent villa and full of incongruous neo-classical busts of the vanished owners. A foreigner stumbling unexpectedly upon these discussions might reasonably suppose they had come upon a group of factory shock-brigaders, for the young cinema workers look very much the same as any other Soviet workers. Strange and fanciful Bohemians are a vanished type.

IF the discussion takes place in the garden it is quite usual for them to be suddenly interrupted by a violent din,—the children working in one or another of the pictures. A boy starts galloping one of the studio horses round and round the park, or the ten year old leading lady of the picture *The Red Partisans* has a fight with two of the leading boys. Not having licked them severely enough, she comes and joins the discussion with more than a suggestion of furious tears. The contrasts of the scene reveal many things. The formal villa and the neo-classical statuary, a strange setting for a crowd of young workers eagerly listening to Eisenstein. Then one and then another cut across his speech, challenging or adding something to his opinion or suggestion as to how the particular theme under discussion can be organically reinforced, the character made more consistent and the form more clearly defined. And continually and persistently, Eisenstein dispenses a deeper knowledge of art, history and psychology to his hearers. He builds for them a cultural background, helping them in the words of Lenin to discover an exact knowledge of the culture created through the entire development of mankind; rework it and create a proletarian culture.

These consultations fascinated me. Gradually I began to understand, not theoretically but actually, the difference in psychology between Eisenstein and the new generation of film workers. I found they were infinitely more interested in the present and the future than the past. That they were free from the old political, moral, religious and social conflicts which had so deeply influenced Eisenstein. That they were not "revolutionary," but the revolution itself! And incredible for a foreigner to discover that the children with whom and for whom they were working did not know the meaning of the words moujik and God!

I WAS continually comparing the attitude towards Eisenstein. Under capitalism, Eisenstein in capacity of scenario consultant would be practically an artistic dictator. At Odessa every point made by him or any one else was subjected to democratic discussion, so that each individual within the collective contributed to the extent of their individual ability. No statement was passed on its face value. The atmosphere which exists among regisseurs, scenarists, cameramen, assistants and actors as units is very impressive; and the relationship between these units and the studio director and the group of C.P. members. The spirit in which suggestions are given and taken seems to be a complete expression of how collective work in art can be accomplished. This atmosphere and the amount of patient study and research which is spent upon each picture put to shame every foreign film critic who attempts to discourse at length about the formal side of the Soviet cinema, and blandly disregards the content and the social responsibility of the artists.

SOCIAL responsibility is reflected in everything the young generation thinks and so, naturally, it sometimes outstrips their sense of humor. This sense of responsibility towards the future is manifested in the attitude adopted by the film collectives towards children. The careful study of child psychology and the treatment of the child actors reveals to an extraordinary degree that in the Soviet Union children are no longer looked upon as amusing property. They are looked upon as the men and women upon whom the future depends. In the studios they are respected and shown affection, not as the children of special individuals but as everybody's children. The reaction of the children themselves is utterly free from shyness or precocity; their manner indicates their independence and sense of freedom.

After my visit to Odessa it is perfectly clear to me that no foreign film critic can understand the complicated development of the Soviet cinema if he attempts to divorce it from the development of Soviet life; or if he forgets the new generation of film workers. Furthermore, if this generation turns out only moderately good pictures for the next few years, pictures which seem inferior to the greatest films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko it is necessary for us to look at them not as agitational but as constructional. They are a concrete, though incomplete, expression of a system which is in the process of finding its own values and creating its own culture. The Soviet cinema has changed, and is still changing its character. Today, the task of the film workers is to express the construction of a new psychology,—an individual
(Continued on Page 21)

The Soviet Dance

The Basis for a Mass Dance Culture

By CHEN I-WAN

SO FAR dance correspondents in the Soviet Union have confined themselves almost exclusively to reviewing the attainments of the theatrical dancers, the mass dances in the parks and clubs, and the present interest in jazz. No one has yet attempted to describe the present state of dance culture in the USSR insofar as it indicates the perspectives of a soviet dance culture that will be entirely unique in the history of the dance, having organizational elements only possible in a socialist society.

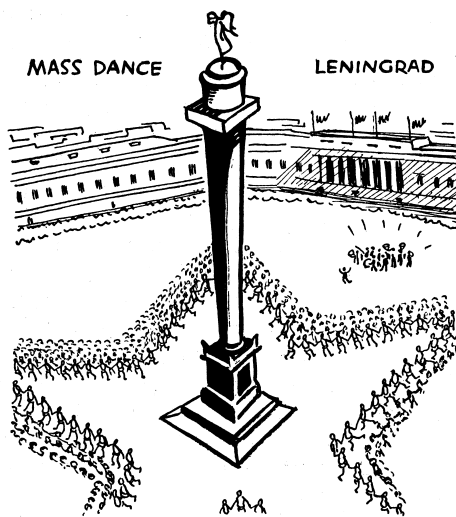
To get an adequate conception of the importance of soviet dance development we must consider it in relation to the state of the dance in pre-revolutionary Russia and in capitalist countries to-day. Under capitalism, the dance, in common with all the arts, has developed with great irregularity and is extremely unevenly distributed among the classes of society. On the one hand there are the superbly trained professional dancers and dances of the leisure classes, on the other the "democratic" dance halls with their "taxi"-girls, and the masses of people who never dance, who have lost even the remembrance of the old folk dances. Though I have somewhat generalized this distinction, it remains fundamentally true for capitalist countries to-day.

Swedish exercises, Isadora Duncan, and the dance halls were typical reflections of the influence of the democratic bourgeoisie on dance culture. Pre-revolutionary Russia was uninfluenced to any great extent by any of these advances. The Imperial Russian Ballet and isolated remnants of the old folk dances among the masses was all of the art of movement the Russian nations knew. The socialist Soviet Union is now making up for this backwardness, with an energy and speed that promise to make a rich dance culture within the next few years.

The general industrial and cultural growth of the USSR under the Five Year Plans has created a tremendous practical interest in physical culture. The tens of thousands of "Ready for Labour and Defense" badge-holders who have passed recognised tests in many branches of sport and physical culture, the entrance of soviet athletes into the world championship class, are the more vivid results of an interest in body development and movement that makes every soviet school, institute, office, factory and farm,—the centres of Soviet life—developing centres of physical culture. *Herein lies the physical basis for a mass dance culture.* While in capitalist societies mass physical culture is an unrealisable dream, the chronic unemployment of mil-

lions being but one obstacle, in the USSR it is a plan in process of realisation.

Secondly the spread of culture, the understanding of the arts— theatre, music, painting etc., is proceeding at a tremendous pace. *Thus the mass cultural basis for the new socialist dance is being created.* Already the dance has become the organised recreation of the masses in their clubs and in their Parks of Culture, and daily new masses are being introduced to the art. Hence the unique perspective—everybody in the USSR is going to dance. It is on this broad and ever growing basis of the dancing masses that the pyramid of the Soviet dance culture is rearing itself.



WHEN one considers the intimate role that movement plays in the life of the working masses it becomes obvious that what might be called the prophylactic and more directly educational functions of dance movement will receive considerably more attention than they do at present. This supposition is strengthened when we consider the role of the State Institutes of Physical Culture. These are at work in most of the capital cities of the Union. Their main task is the training of instructors and coaches for gymnastic and sports activities, but they are also doing valuable work in the scientific development of specialised physical training systems. As patrons of factories they devise exercises suitable for workers of different specialities, that are regularly performed during the course of the work day. Considering the cultural transformations that are taking place in factory societies, nothing seems more probable than the development of "trade" dances growing out of these exercises, that will become as common in the factories as college cheers are in America. Such educational dance rhythms would, properly utilised, have the advantage of an accen-

tuated psychic reaction that merely repeated gymnastic exercises lack. These ideas of artistic gymnastics have received the attention already of the Council of Physical Culture, IPC, leading organ in this sphere.

The IPC plays a significant role in the organisation of all sports festivals and demonstrations. Their students are constantly represented at the Olympiads of art. They are the organisers of those near-dances that take place on the Uritski Square in Leningrad shown in Vertov's *Three Songs of Lenin*, and on the Red Square of Moscow, when hundreds of gymnasts form wheeling circles and stars, rhythmic hammers and sickles. Primitive perhaps as dancing, but a beginning.

As a result of the wave of interest in jazz (there was never anything more than a lukewarm interest in the resuscitation of the old Polkas, Mazurkas and round dances) many of the clubs have opened permanent dance circles to explore the possibilities of the foxtrot and the blues. It is characteristic that the Red Army and the Moscow House of Scientists were among the pioneers in this; professional dignity in the Soviet Union being enhanced rather than otherwise by the distinction of being an *udarnik* of the dance.

Thus a vast reserve of performers is being created for participation in mass dramatic ballets of hundreds of performers in the parks of culture and on the squares during revolutionary festivals. Moscow has already witnessed analogous dramatic spectacles in the Gorki Park last winter.

Thus the gulf that has hitherto existed between the professional theatrical dance and that of the masses is being bridged. An important role is being played by the many groups of professional dancers who employ a modified classical training or are developing their own forms of plastic dance training. However the positive effect of most of these dancers is considerably lessened through their being unconscious of the real role they play in the development of the soviet dance culture.

The development of stable dance circles in the cultural centres has already posed the immediate problem of devising a popular form of dance training. It is obvious that the classical ballet cannot satisfy this demand, nor can the systems of Duncan, Dalcroze, Wigman, Graham. Though these latter systems are a considerable step towards the democratization of the dance in comparison to the classical ballet, they are all specifically bourgeois democratizations, limited in their artistic expression to bourgeois ideology. I doubt whether any one "proletarian dance form" will result

from the vast amount of experiment that is now going on among dancers and physical culturists, just as there is no one form of "proletarian" theatre or literature. But the greater the variety of training systems and creative methods the richer the content of the dance culture will be. Socialism does not signify sameness. With the brilliant example of the soviet theatre before them, and the experiences of the RAPP period in literature there is no danger of attempted regimentation by any one group. This does not mean the death of the classical ballet—under the conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat even the "feudal" ballet serves revolutionary ends.

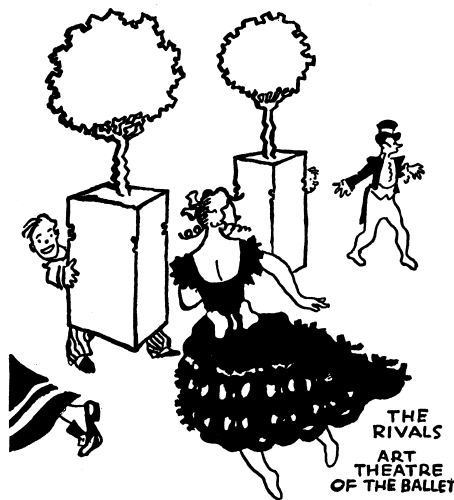
THE solution of these problems are already busying the thoughts of the government organs concerned—chiefly the art section of the Commissariat of Education. A choreographic section has been founded at the theatrical workers' club; the cooperation of dance groups and new theatres of ballet is being organised, while the initiative of clubs and parks is actively fostered.

The next most likely development would seem to be the reorganisation of existing dance technicums or the founding of new dance institutes that will bear an analogous relation to the new dance culture as the IPC bear to the development of physical culture. That is, they will prepare trainers, composers and organisers and performers and choreographers. These Institutes will be the missing organisational links between the mass dance and the theatrical dance.

TOGETHER with these changes we can also look forward to a continued development of the older classical dance schools in Moscow and Leningrad. Considerable changes have already taken place in these schools since the revolution, corresponding to the slow advance of their parent theatres towards a more modern dance expression. The system of training now includes a regular middle school course, which is continued in the ballet technicum to include a college course with particular attention to art theory and history. It is proposed to add a regular university course to include a more intensive study of dialectic materialism, and the arts allied to dancing. That is, develop a really comprehensive dance education.

Thus the new generation is graduating from the Academic Schools with a modern intellectual equipment and a new socialist outlook on life and art. The basis of the system of physical training remains the classical ballet, but training in rhythmic, acrobatics, plastic and dramatic dance expression has been added. In the academic theatres the old classical ballets are still produced in practically their original forms. They are designed to acquaint the masses with the classical heritage. The new ballets all attempt to attain to a modern ballet expression, and are criticised with the new criterions that this demands. Beginning with the *Red Poppy* in 1926 the trend has

been towards ballets with continuous dramatic action based on realistic themes. But the realism of these productions has been far from consistent. In *The Football-player*, for instance, the hero is a modern soviet athlete—but he dances like a fairy prince—and indeed is almost nothing but a fairy prince in a football jersey. Similar comparisons



could be drawn from almost any of the new ballets, and this incongruity is characteristic of the ballets as a whole. In the *Flame of Paris*—one of the new productions—on the theme of the early stages of the French Revolution, the dances of the peasants differ but slightly from the highly idealised "peasant" divertissements of the fairy ballets. As far as dancing is concerned the high points of the ballet are purely classical dances that have nothing to do with the main action of the spectacle. Thus the main defect up to now has been the pouring of the new wine of socialist themes into the old bottles of classical form that were never meant to hold such a vivifying liquid.

Nevertheless this constant striving towards modern expression has inevitably resulted in the enrichment of the expressive means of the ballet, in the training of the dancers in modern movement. Many, at first glance infinitesimal, gains are slowly moving the ballet forward to an adequate expression of modern themes.

The *Bakhchissarai Fountain* produced in Leningrad by Zakharov is based on the old romantic subject of Pushkin's poem, but the accumulated experiences of the last few years have enabled the theatre to give us the most successful modern ballets that we have. Much of the success of the production is due to the superb work of Ulanova as the heroine. The present troupes of classical ballet dancers are technically as perfect as any of their forerunners. They include such dancers as Semyonova, Lepeshinskaya, Messerer, Yermolayev in Moscow, Chabukiani and Ulanov in Leningrad. But what they need is competent direction in modern ballets.

THE problem of choreographers is a serious one with the ballets just now. So far there are three—Moiseyev (*Salambo and Football-player*) Vaino-

nen (*Flames of Paris*) and Zakharov (*Bakhchissarai Fountain*)—who show understanding and talent in approaching the new problems of the ballet. Up to now they have been much hindered by lack of suitable librettos and music, but the last contest for ballet works in which the leading soviet musicians took part has placed good material at their disposal, among other things a re-edition of *Tyl Eulenspiegel*. They all make the mistake however of attempting the traditional three-hour ballets that entail enormous expense and time and reduce the chances of success in this experimental period.

Kasian Goleizovski, who is now producing a revival of the *Sleeping Beauty* and who has just completed new Polovetzian dances for the Bolshoi Theatre *Prince Igor* production, is a ballet master of the older generation with a great talent for plastic composition. He was a pupil of Fokine, a typical product of the aesthetic eroticism of a large part of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia. In his *Beautiful Joseph* (1924) he entirely dispensed with toe-dancing. It was a short dramatic ballet dealing with Joseph's adventures with Potiphar's wife, that needed no program commentary or the naive pantomime of the classical ballet to carry over its meaning. It was dramatic dance movement from beginning to end. It was however ideologically the typical product of an epoch that was completely divorced from the revolutionary reality of a land that had just proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat. That ballet proved conclusively that a revolution in form by no means signified a revolution in content. The next ballet of the Academic Theatres—*The Red Poppy* proved just as conclusively that revolutionary subject matter mechanically united to the old form resulted in an unconsciously "opportunist" content that all too often lent itself to humorous interpretations.

Thus the soviet academic ballets have yet to fulfill the ideals of Noverre, with a ballet that is no longer divided into "action" and divertissement, with a dance spectacle in which dramatic action flows continuously through the whole composition. Their aim is to carry the attainments of Fokine and the European Ballet Russe onto the higher ideological level of socialist art, by developing, on the direct basis of classical technique, a more modern dance language. It is a pity in this respect that the older ballerinas are so chary of relinquishing their pirouettes for bolder if more problematic expressive means.

There are many exponents of the classical ballet who consider that the progress of the Academic Theatres is unnecessarily slow. Among these is Victorina Krieger, foremost character dancer of the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre who has formed the Art Theatre of the Ballet affiliated to the Nemirovich-Danchenko Opera Theatre. The members of this group have all had a thorough classical ballet training, many of them in the technicum of the Bolshoi Theatre, but they are now all undergoing

an intensive training in the dramatic methods of Stanislavski (the so-called psychological method) and their ballets are collectively produced by dramatic regisseurs from the Moscow Art Theatre such as Mordvinin and choreographers, chief among them, Holfine. The central problem of the group is the development of a "dancing actor." The results so far have been pleasing but not particularly astonishing—*The Rivals* (1933) is a re-edition of the classic *Vain Precautions*. Dramatically it is much better knit together than the classical production, the personages being more clearly characterised. Regular ballet theatres that have as yet hardly attained a regular artistic individuality have been organised in several of the national capitals: Kiev, Odessa, Tiflis, Kharkov.

NON-CLASSICAL tendencies in the Soviet Union are grouped under the general term "plastic." The last few years have seen the gradual disintegration of the older groups that were at all times small and but loosely organised around one or two dancers or choreographers. The Isadora Duncan group, most consistent of them all in style, failed to understand the ideas even of its teacher in regard to the mass dance, failed to develop its style of movement and expression in relation to changing soviet reality and gradually became a purely theatrical group employing outside composers for its new compositions. The Dram-Ballet with a mixed plastic and classical composition fell a victim to its own eclecticism in regard to style. Many other groups exist following one or the other plastic tendency, in Moscow, Leningrad and other centres. There are also several schools of "artistic gymnastics".

The most productive dancer is Sylvia Chen, a young Chinese dancer who has received her main artistic inspiration in the Soviet Union and has made the development of a socialist dance culture her aim. She has received a fundamental classical dance education and reinforced it with three years of study in the Moscow dramatic institute. She has renounced the purely classical form in favour of a search for her own original style of movement and creation that will enable her to express the content of modern life as she sees it. Her search has led her to national dance forms, jazz, dramatic dance sketches, agitational dance cartoons and the more "abstract" forms of dance expression based on generalised symbols. These latter dances however—a series of typical works of the significant, "milestone" composers—Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy etc.—are diametrically opposed to the old style of "interperative" dancing. They have an objective quality that the traditional interpretive dancers entirely lacked. As a performer she has a natural dramatic talent, grace and a sure sense of rhythm.

Vera Drutskaya, also a product of the classical school, is appearing now in her own compositions—dance sketches of petty

bourgeois types and city unfortunates—a prostitute, a waif, a street dancer, a petty bourgeois maid of the last century—types of the old world as seen by one of the new. Drutskaya is master of her genre of intimate impressionist art, but seems unwilling to try other themes, though her plans for the future are interesting—a dramatic sketch of Sophie Perovskaya the revolutionary terrorist, and a cycle of characters from Don Quixote, typifying the anachronism of an old world mind in a new world.

Emil May has found an excellent field for his talent at the Moscow Children's Theatre in collaboration with Natalie Satz, the regisseur, where he is responsible for the excellent dance work and pantomime in *MIK*. He is primarily an eccentric, satirical dancer portraying the more neurotic types of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois humanity—*The Apache* (1927), the *Football-player* (excess of sport), *The Marathon Dancer*. His latest dances depict the Russian whiteguard emigré and the social demagogue.

FOR the theatre and the ballet these dancers are important as showing the way towards a complete utilisation of the classical technique and art heritage in the presentation of modern types and themes. While May and Drutskaya have confined themselves to satire and the depiction of negative types—Sylvia Chen has given us some of the best portrayals of positive types that modern Soviet dancing has so far produced, in her soviet rational dances and Chinese sketches. It is unfortunate, how-



ever, that these dancers have not systematised the results of their experiments and methods of work for the benefit of others.

The development of these dancers and others of their type has also been marked by the artistic opportunism that we have remarked in the productions of the Academic Theatres. Only too often have they tried to make a red kerchief take the place of a truly revolutionary ideology. In most cases this opportunism was the result of a very natural tendency to preserve the old accustomed forms of movement instead of boldly setting out to find new forms for the expression of new ideas. As I have pointed out, these three dancers have attained considerable successes as soon as they

decided to adapt their form, revolutionize it if need be, for the better presentation of their new themes. They are also less bombastic in their themes than before, more careful about giving big names to little dances. A dancer today rarely essays to dance *The Revolution*. The approach to the development of a revolutionary content is much more concrete. A smaller, more concrete aspect of the big theme is taken, easier to conceive and realise in dance form, and producing a greater effect on the audience. It has taken an extraordinarily long time for the dancers to realise that unless the conception of the theme is really revolutionary no amount of red flags will make the dance so, but that a dancer with a developed socialist ideology can take any theme and treat it in a revolutionary way. That of course does not mean that even such "revolutionary" dances as they used to do, have not played an important role in the education of the dancers and the public towards revolutionary ideas, just as today the mere appearance of a revolutionary Red Flag on capitalist stages has tremendous significance.

In criticism of all dance groups and individuals it must be said that they do not yet understand the general line of advance of the soviet dance culture. Most of them limit their interest in the dance of the masses—in the development of a truly socialist dance culture, to the exhibition among the masses of workers and peasants of their own compositions and the classical repertoire that is, to the fulfilling of the slogan of "dance to the masses." It is true that the scale in which this was and is being done is unique in dance history, that it played a tremendous role in introducing millions to the best dancing the soviet theatre could offer. But to-day this is not enough. The millions now want to dance themselves, and the experience of the professionals is being made comparatively little use of.

Few of them look forward to the day when everyone in the Union will dance, when gymnastics and dancing will play the important physical cultural and cultural role it is so specifically adapted to play in every soviet school, factory and farm, when dancing with all its possibilities for robust gaiety and fun will be daily recreation of the millions in clubs and dance halls, when it will produce mass spectacles for the enrichment of festivals and demonstrations, ballets with all the heroism of the epoch, and take a deserved place in the development of the synthetic theatre.

One reason for the backwardness of the theatrical dance in the family of the soviet arts is the dead weight of bourgeois conceptions of the dance and its social role that still lie heavy on the minds of the dancers. But the development of a soviet dance culture is rooted in something firmer than the genius of any one individual. It lies in the initiative and creative power of the masses that are mastering all forms of art, that are now turning their attention to the art of dancing.

New Soviet Movies

Films of the National Minorities

"The Soviet kino must express the needs and culture of all Soviet nationalities."

Flowing Waters (Vostokfilm)

IT is the task of Vostokfilm to express the needs and cultures of some 28 Soviet nationalities. This company is charged with the tremendous job of making films in 28 languages, not merely different language versions of the same film, but as many different styles, and numberless forms. These 28 nations are the last ones left in the Soviet Union without film organizations of their own. The Ukraine has its *Ukrainfilm*, White Russia its *Belgoskino*, Georgia its *Goskinprom*, Tadzhikistan its *Tadjikkino*, Armenia and Azerbaijan their own, but the Crimea, the North Caucasus, the Volga Region, the Far North, most of Siberia and the Far East, until they develop producing groups of their own, benefit by Vostokfilm's many-sided attentions.

On the upper reaches of the Volga, in the center of a big timbering district, is the Autonomous Region of the Mari, or Cheremiss, a race of people of Finnish ancestry, and a nation cinematically under the patronage of Vostokfilm. A scenario dealing with their life and activities was turned over to two young regisseurs recently employed by Vostokfilm. Donskoi and Legoshin took this, their first national film problem, to their former teacher, Yutkevich, and asked him to supervise its making. One of the sound studios of Lenfilm, the Leningrad branch of Soyuzfilm, was hired, and the idea of an experimental national sound film was enthusiastically received by the whole personnel, and the four best actors of the Leningrad studio volunteered their services. The result of this group enthusiasm is *Flowing Waters* and for natural charm and lightness of touch, has far to go to meet its equal. About the only comparison with an American product would be found in an early Charles Ray film. Its sentiment, rarely seen in Soviet films, is sincere and honest.

The theme of the film is training national cadres for national culture, in this case, music. All the high points in the film keep the theme clearly before you by being directly related to music in general, and to this incident in particular. The quarrel that starts the plot moving is an interruption to a folk-tune on a hand-made little flute. The first fumbling attempts that the heroine makes to write are accompanied by the first hesitating notes that the hero is learning to play, a thousand miles away. In a swell passage describing the students at the conservatory, each student is characterized by a particular instrument played in a particular way, the passage ending on the dramatic meeting of hero and heroine, where the drama is left entirely to the orchestra that is rehearsing on the floor above. A Bach fantasia played by a graduating prisoner brings all the strings of the plot together. The film ends with a powerful composition built upon the little folk-theme that we heard at the beginning.

Gardin's role is splendidly conceived and executed, and he, like the other actors in the film, is so enthusiastic about the untouched material that Vostokfilm is constantly touching, that he has offered his services whenever needed. The two young regisseurs are in the enviable position of making a complete success with their first picture. The company is widening out into international subject matter, and Legoshin will film the recent Rubenstein novel, *The Path of the Samurai*, while Donskoi, who is looking for a scenario on Jewish life, may use the one

that Robert Gessner wrote during his stay here.

There is gradually being formed in Vostokfilm a tradition of successful experiment (*Turksib* started the tradition) and other films now in production may have as great a career: *Prisoners* with a scenario by Pogodin that is available in English in International Literature No. 4, 1934; *Kara-Bugaz* by Paustovsky; *In the Place of Buddha*, a film of Buriat-Mongolia by the director Ivanov-Barkov.

The Last Masquerade (Goskinprom, Georgia) (Russian version reviewed)

CONSIDERING that *The Last Masquerade* is the first sound film from the Georgian film studio in Tiflis, it is a surprisingly original and mature piece of work. Most first attempts in sound are either imitative or childish, but *The Last Masquerade* needs no excuses.

Chiaurelli, as author and director, has given a broad adequate panorama of tsarism, imperialist war, intervention, and civil war as the Caucasian republics experienced them. He has chosen to introduce his characters and his theme within a very limited space, a single house and a courtyard in Tiflis, from where the film widens in perspective, producing a satisfying effect of growing intensity. With such wealth of material, there is the danger of superficiality, as in many "epic" films, but Chiaurelli keeps all major and minor elements under control. The growth of the boy revolutionary's consciousness is accompanied by a development in his whole appearance, his gestures, even his voice.

The last masquerade of the title refers to the final attempt of the bourgeoisie to win over the masses, this time using the mask of socialist demagoguery. The Mensheviks receive the full blow of Chiaurelli's natural talent for caricature, which is applied to them even more forcefully than to the rich fools who crowd the house for the wedding at the beginning of the film. The

climax of the film is quite rightly the most effective cinematically, where we are shown the banquet for the interventionists, where the music of a native Georgian dance drowns out the noise of the machine guns that are massacring a demonstrating crowd outside. The aptness of this parallel action lies in that the Georgian dance is a centuries-old stylization of the escape and chase of lovers, and to see these swift, handsome circlings alternated with the frantic escape outside of the ambushed crowd, produces a gripping dramatic effect.

Lieutenant Kizhe (The Czar Wants to Sleep) (Belgoskino, White Russia)

Although this is not a new film, having opened in Moscow last spring, it deserves some notice in this group of National films, for its faults. It is the only one of this group that cannot claim a correct Soviet approach to the problem of films, which is unfortunate, because it is also the only one of the group to demonstrate how the national film companies are not restricted to peculiarly national themes for their choice of subjects.

The film is a delicate satire based on an incident of Tsar Paul's time. Lavish attention was paid to production, the casting was choice, the acting exquisite, the direction elegant, Prokofiev wrote engaging music—and the result is embarrassingly empty. If it had come from Paris or London or Hollywood studios, such a delicate satire on the eccentricities of an emperor against the sole background of his court, might surprise and be welcomed by us, but this is a Soviet film, and Soviet standards oblige films to show us history with depth. It is hard to imagine that a Soviet film dealing with Tsar Paul, unparalleled for his mad cruelty, and mass murders, should appear as a whimsey about the consequences of a squeal from a pinched courtier. As delightful as the film may be, its omissions are unforgivable. J. L.



From *Flowing Waters*, directed by Donski & Legoshin.

Vostok Film



From **Flowing Waters**, directed by Donski & Legoshin.

Vostok Film

The New Soviet Cinema

(Continued from Page 9)

first stage, has at the same time incorporated all the essential points of the second stage. This has been done without compromise and without surrendering any artistic principles—not in the way of eclectic mixture but in the way of organic synthesis.

Having utilized the entire experience of the poetic style and emotional appeal of the first stage, and at the same time, fully availing themselves of the thematic depth unfolded in the living, intensely realistic, human image, characteristic of the second period—the Vasilievs succeeded in achieving unforgettable portrayals of living human beings and in presenting an unforgettable picture of the epoch.

The composition of the film is most remarkable. It is not a return to the old forms of plot composition in vogue during the first stage. It is by far not a movement "back to the plot." It is a movement "forward to a new form of plot."

Retaining the epic form popular during the initial stage of our cinema, the authors were able to create within the epic framework a brilliant gallery of heroic individualities, which formerly was the exclusive province of the traditional plot. Shakespearean? Undoubtedly! Not a direct descendant of *King Lear*, *Macbeth* or *Othello*, though. The poetics of *Chapaev's* composition is not of that character. Nevertheless, the style of *Chapaev* is Shakespearean—the Shakespeare that has given the world a style of dramaturgy no less remarkable than the above-mentioned—the Shakespeare of the great historical chronicles.

In my belief, the appearance of *Chapaev* puts an end to the conflict of different stages in our cinema. Chronologically, *Chapaev* ushers in the fourth five-year period of Soviet cinematography. It also inaugurates a new orientation. The appearance of *Chapaev* marks the inauguration of an era of great synthesis. An era which incorporates all the previous achievements, in all the uncompromising purity of their sterling quality, and puts them entirely at the disposal of millions of humanity, instilling them with a new fountain of energy for gigantic struggles, heroic achievements and creative activity.

The victory of the *Chapaev* is our first victory on this glorious road.

Translated by LEON RUTMAN

A New Generation

(Continued from Page 16)

psychology. The films of monumental destruction are passed. Eisenstein even declares today that typeage is passed. The individual,—the socialist man—is emerging. And why?

Marx says, "all emancipation leads back to the human world, to relationships, to men themselves." The personal life, Soviet personal life, is pushing its way into every branch of Soviet art where men as citizens recognize and organize their capacities as social capacities.

What They Said About Cinema

CZAR NICHOLAS II

CONSIDER cinematography an empty, useless and even harmless amusement. Only an abnormal individual can put this vulgar circus on a par with art. It is all sheer nonsense and should not be encouraged."

(Resolution made in 1913 on report of the Police Department concerning letter from America to F. I. Rodichev, member of the State Duma, dealing with the outlook for building up a moving picture industry in Russia. Quoted from article by B. Vishnevsky in *Soviet Cinema* No. 1-2, 1917).

LENIN

AFTER listening with great attention and interest to my report Lenin said that he will do his best to put greater means at the disposal of the photocinema department, but that he is convinced that the cinema, if properly organized, would more than pay for itself. He again emphasized the necessity of definite and balanced proportion between films released purely for amusement purposes and productions of a scientific character. He further said the production of new films should be permeated with communist ideas, reflecting the bright side of life, and added that it would be best to start with pictures of a more realistic character, for, in his opinion, the time for such pictures as are produced now has not yet come.

At the conclusion of our conversation Lenin said:—"By proper organization and management this department should become financially independent, and besides, you will receive a substantial appropriation as soon as the country's economic situation permits it. As soon as this is achieved, you should start *production on a wide scale, bringing wholesome pictures to the masses of the cities and particularly, of the villages.*"

To this Vladimir Ilyich added, with one of his rare smiles:—"You have the reputation of a patron of art, so bear in mind that of all arts the cinema is the most important for us."

(From Reminiscences of A. V. Lunacharsky).

... After the October Revolution I had many occasions to hear Vladimir Ilyich speak of the cinema. He never missed a chance to emphasize that our cinematographical repertory must be absolutely free from the vulgar drivel that keeps flowing to us from countries where bourgeois philistine tastes and ideas prevail. He condemned the flood of sentimental infamy designed to allay the growing discontent of the people, to draw a curtain of quasi-romantic lies over the real problems of life. . . .

In his conversations with us Vladimir Ilyich definitely outlined for us the tasks of the cinema. He demanded from all workers in this field careful painstaking preparation of each production, with deep thought plot and recommended that all

"films of an educational character should be first carefully gone over by old *movie specialists.*" This clearly illustrates his desire to eliminate all the lying sentimental humdrum that inundates the movies, increasingly corrupting the tastes of millions of spectators.

Of course, we have to avoid tediousness. There can be no doubt that we have to introduce into the cinema not only science, art, socialist construction, but also humor, laughter, comic and dramatic scenes, palpitating with real life. All this, however, must have one underlying purpose: the struggle for a new life, for a new morality, for a better future, for science and art, for an evergrowing mighty proletarian effort in this period of proletarian dictatorship.

(Personal recollection by V. Bonch-Bruyevich).

N. BUKHARIN

THROUGHOUT the world the cinema became one of the most powerful means of influencing the mind and ideas of the masses. Along with the press, cinema is an inalienable attribute of modern civilization and the bourgeoisie has been able to make it a powerful tool of propaganda.

The present stage of our cultural development is characterized by a great expansion, by a penetration into the broadest strata of the people. . . . It is easy to see, therefore, why in our present period of proletarian dictatorship, the importance of the cinema for us may become truly gigantic. The city as well as the country must come into the sphere of influence of the cinema—the Soviet cinema, of course. Here is a boundless field. Here is one of the noblest, most thankful, and most cultural of our tasks. . . .

(*Proletarian Cinema* No. 1, 1925).

N. KRUPSKAYA

Leo Tolstoy measured the artistic value of a work by what extent it was capable of "infecting" others.

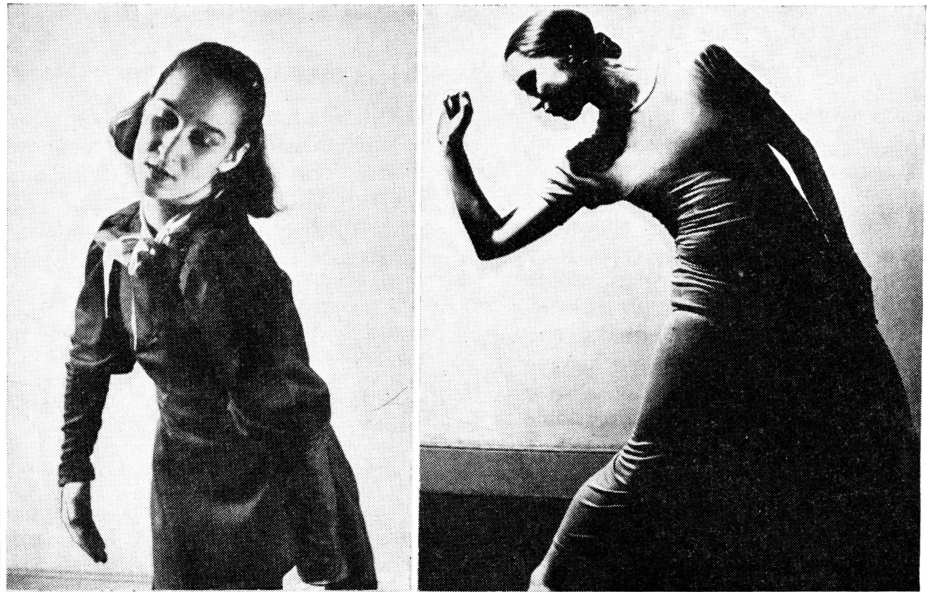
October (Ten Days That Shook The World) by Eisenstein) is undoubtedly infectious. It brings to life again scenes and faces seen during the period of revolution. Alongside of *October* another film unfolds itself, a subjective, stirring film which one feels he has personally experienced.

When one sees *October* one feels that something new has been born, that a new art is already taking shape—the art which reflects the life of the masses and their experiences. This art has an unlimited future. The film *October* is a slice of this art of the future. In it there is very much of the beautiful. . . .

(*Kino*, March 20, 1928, from a discussion on the film *October* between participants in the October Revolution and people in the world of art).

Translated by LEON RUTMAN

Soloists of Workers Dance League



TOP: Anna Sokolow in *Histrionics*. Jane Dudley in *The Dream Ends*. CENTRE: Edith Segal in *Tom Mooney*. Miriam Blecher in *Woman*. Lillian Mehlman in *Defiance*. BOTTOM ROW: Nadia Chilkovsky in *Parasite*. Sokolow, Maslow and Mehlman in *Challenge*. Sophie Maslow in *Themes from a Slavic People*.

PHOTOS BY NAT MESSIK • CHILKOVSKY PHOTO BY MATYAS CALDY

The Revolutionary Solo Dance

By STEVE FOSTER

SURELY, in America there is maturing a new revolutionary art. In two performances at the Civic Repertory and Ambassador theatres on November 25th and December 2nd, young dancers from the Workers Dance League gave stirring evidence of their progress in the dance. Their dance is unhampered by an outmoded tradition, is flexible and broad in its forms and realistic in its approach to social and artistic problems. It is a dance presenting new aesthetic values and a variety of creations superior to the limited, false and artificial products of the day. Mass audiences participate in this dance in that they demand the dancers present significant, creative expressions of the social milieu in which they live. They test the performer by this rigorous and difficult standard, and inspire her by their ready response and appreciation of her achievements. The audiences at these two performances were very enthusiastic, and the dancers were talented and praiseworthy.

Lillian Mehlman, in her solo offering, *Defiance*, was a genuine spitfire on the stage. Her dynamic tempo was sustained from the first to the last gesture. *Defiance* was surcharged with energetic rhythms and direct, forceful, electric movements. Her dance composition was the spirited challenge and expression of a defiant rebel.

By comparison *Awake* by Miriam Blecher, *March* by Nadia Chilkovsky, and *Challenge* by the dance trio, Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow, and Lillian Mehlman, were less forceful. The composition of the *March* was more original and imaginative than *Awake*, which was little more than a well-performed cliché. The choreography of *Challenge* was interesting and varied but the dance lacked the spirit and force of *Defiance*. The upward thrust and leap of the central figure between the two crouched dancers did not convey its intended challenging and explosive character.

With true lyricism, Sophie Maslow, in *Themes From a Slavic People*, danced a composition of fine rhythmical patterns and gracefully captured the spirit of the folk dance.

Miriam Blecher's three dances to negro poems were her most successful efforts. She made effective use of her recitations, which accompanied and harmonized with her movements. In brief, staccato motions, she presented synoptic dance dramas that expressed her convictions and sympathies. Her composition, *The Woman*, though well-performed, was too vaguely conceived and not fully visualized. It dealt with a generality, and emphasized sybaritic, feminine features instead of depicting a specific type or working-class character. In contrast, Nadia Chilkovsky's portrayal of

a homeless girl was much more realistic.

Nadia Chilkovsky's dance, *Parasite*, was a perfectly conceived study of the duplicity behind the well-bred leisure-class mask of gentility. Gestures of refinement and grace were subtly emphasized and then contrasted to the barbaric, grasping, greedy actions that motivate the capitalist. When the over-reaching, bloated creature burst with his own greed, fell and died, there was no need of explanation; the symbol was clear and the contrast vivid. The artist created in the best and most precise manner possible.

THE wit, liveliness and humour of Anna Sokolow's compositions are rarities in the dance. She is the most professional performer. She is in command of her technique, aware of what she can accomplish and the effects she can produce.

The satire in *Parasite* appears heavy-handed besides the deft, humorous touches Anna Sokolow employs. The *Romantic Dances*, performed with fine balance and grace, are parodies that rip the pretense from the romantic poseur. In *Histrionics*, there is the same verve and laugh-provoking wit and humour. But there is a tendency towards the superficial, an emphasis on the droll gesture. *Histrionics*, instead of a caricature of theatrical affectations, could well have been a study in hysteria. The same frenetic, affected, madly exaggerated qualities could have been adapted to a portrayal of the duality of an hysterical character and the frustration that lies behind such hysterics. Instead of a one-sided parody, a sober, understanding study of such a character could have been woven into a more profound dance.

Death of a Tradition, danced by the Maslow-Mehlman-Sokolow trio, in its exaggerated posturing of solemnity, its caricature of pompous and empty ritual, is magnificent mockery and burlesque sustained to the last, expiring, ridiculous gesture of a senile and meaningless tradition.

The opening stance typifies and sets the mood for Jane Dudley's *The Dream Ends*, but the composition is not entirely effective. The dance is too vague, the exposition too lengthy. What is dreamed? Why does the dreamer awake? What disturbs and upsets his dreams? The dance is not fully realized. If the dancer sustained her movements to a cinematic slow-motion a greater effect of dreaminess and unreality would be obtained. Such unnatural tempo would be effectively utilized. The abrupt, swift awakening would have greater effect and would stand out in sharper contrast.

The work of Jane Dudley and Nadia Chilkovsky is similar in that both reveal a greater interest and insight into the so-

cial scene than their fellow-artists. In Chilkovsky's *Homeless Girl* and *Song of the Machine*, and in Jane Dudley's *Life of a Worker*, the two dancers experiment with machine and labor rhythms. In *Time is Money*, danced to a poem, Jane Dudley makes the most effective use of these rhythms. It is her finest dance composition and one of the best in the repertoire. There is no attempt, as in the disappointing, backward efforts of Edith Segal, to act the poem. The poem is imaginatively interpreted and acts as a dramatic accompaniment to the dance. The dance contains its own logic and composition. Work movements are designed and their tiring, maddening effects are conveyed. The conclusion, however, fails. It is not developed as part of the dance composition. Whereas he is a logical outcome of the idea of the poem, in the dance the financier is not brought out as a figure in opposition to the worker. The straight, inexpressive figure of the financier reveals that Jane Dudley was unclear and undecided as to his portrait. Some gesture or stance designed to typify the financier would help to clarify and perfect the final movement. Sound accompaniment, the well-timed, bizarre noises of machines, would add dramatic power to the dance. *Time is Money* also has excellent theatrical possibilities as a group dance.

With the exception of Edith Segal's offerings, the dances were much superior to the previous work of the dance groups and solo performers in the Workers Dance League. The Workers Dance League is establishing an excellent repertoire. It's young and talented dancers are developing themselves as mature artists of the new, revolutionary dance. They have already become an important force in the new theatre and the working-class cultural renaissance.

The annual International Theatre Week, sponsored by the International Union of the Revolutionary Theatre, takes place February 15 to 25. This occasion serves to acquaint the American public with the achievements and activities of the workers' theatre arts in all lands. The League of Workers Theatres and the Workers Dance League are joining forces for this event, and the National Film and Photo League and Workers Music League are also expected to. Activities will include performances, lectures, and symposia. Plans are to send speakers out that week to any mass organization, trade union local, dramatic association, etc. that requests it. A special button for mass distribution will be issued. Material on the history and program of the international organization is being prepared, and will be available to all groups.

Plays of the Month

Sailors of Cattaro and Gold Eagle Guy

By LEON ALEXANDER

THE current dramatic season has been characterized so far by an unusual number of historical dramas: *Jayhawker*, *The Farmer Takes a Wife*, *Gold Eagle Guy*, *Valley Forge*, *L'Aiglon*—and in a more specialised sense, *Sailors of Cattaro*. This is no fortuitous occurrence, no more than is the biography and fiction which has become so popular. This wide interest in history is the result of definite socio-psychological causes, and this historical form is especially revealing of an author's social outlook or his lack of one. It is from both these points of view that I intend to consider *Gold Eagle Guy* and *Sailors of Cattaro*.

I have already reviewed these two plays in the *Daily Worker*. A newspaper review, however, is of of necessity impressionistic. I therefore wish here to reconsider my previous reviews and to take up those ideological questions which I had to neglect.

There are periods when a ruling class is totally unaware of history, except as a romantic pageant of its past. That period corresponds in general to that of its highest stability. To take a current play, *L'Aiglon* is characteristic of that type; whatever its other qualities or faults, its chief appeal lies in its patriotic fervor.

However, as social and economic institutions begin to disintegrate, as the development of historical forces becomes a menace to a large section of the ruling class, they become increasingly aware of history. At the same time, the rising revolutionary

class finds in history a weapon. A bourgeois playwright may write of history from several points of view; the tone of his work may be nostalgic, romantic or cynical. He may be merely enamoured of a picturesque historical figure or of a past which he considers better than the present, more heroic or more peaceful. Frequently he chooses his heroes out of the period when his own class was carrying on a revolutionary struggle. Fascist influences, however, lead him to deny that revolutionary past and look for his heroes to the old feudal enemies. A peculiar sadism, born of disillusion, hopelessness and cynicism may even lead the dramatist to sneer at the history of his class. A few more honest playwrights, with greater integrity, may seek to shed light on present conditions by analogy to the past, or by showing their historical roots.

Maxwell Anderson partakes curiously of all these categories. There is honesty in his examination of the motives at work at Valley Forge, but there is also confusion and an undeniable eye to the Guild Theatre box office. (Even so, the much-praised verse is prosaic and though there are lively interludes, the play moves slowly. Merivale plays Washington as Anderson wrote him, ponderously, competently, and prosaically). The broad cracks at Congress are in the affectionate Will Rogers tradition. The fight-the-British speeches of honest backwoods yokels are meat for any D.A.R. defense campaign. And the reversion to a period where, in retrospect at least, the

issues are simple and clear, gives the relief of escapism.

The revolutionary playwright, however, approaches history in the same way as revolutionary historians; he sees it in terms of the economic contradictions and conflicts of the period. He does not need to distort it for the sake of drama: he knows that the truth is on the side of the revolution. A sense of the ultimate revolutionary end gives drive to his play. His tone is realistic, optimistic, epic. He must reject the romantic approach which overemphasizes the role of the individual, to the neglect of social forces.

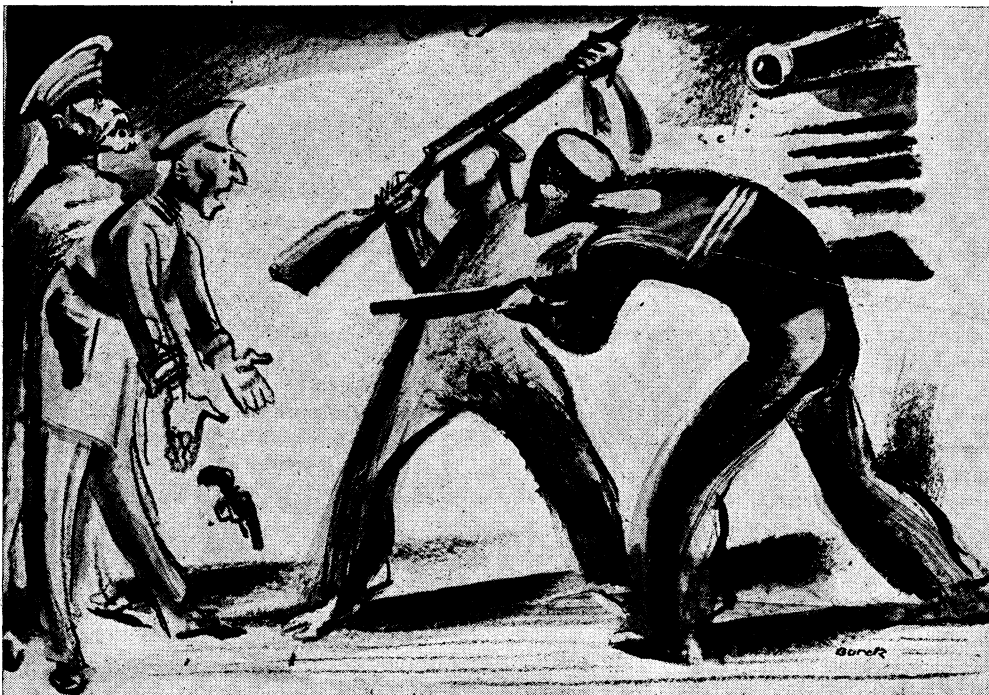
It is also important to remember that the bourgeoisie—and especially the lower middle classes—become aware of social decay before any large section of the working class grows conscious of its historic function. A bourgeois writer may therefore proclaim himself a radical because he attacks the present basis of capitalism—imperialism. Actually, and unless he recognizes and portrays clearly the role of the working class in changing society, his effect is that of a reactionary who wants to turn back the wheels of time.

THE above will partially explain why I have found *Gold Eagle Guy* not only a bad play but one that carries dangerous implications as well. It is romantic in the widest sense of the word: in the use of far-fetched, violent episodes; in its isolation of a single individual's fate; in its growing removal from social realities with every scene; in its attitude towards love; in its unnecessary distortion of history for the sake of melodrama.

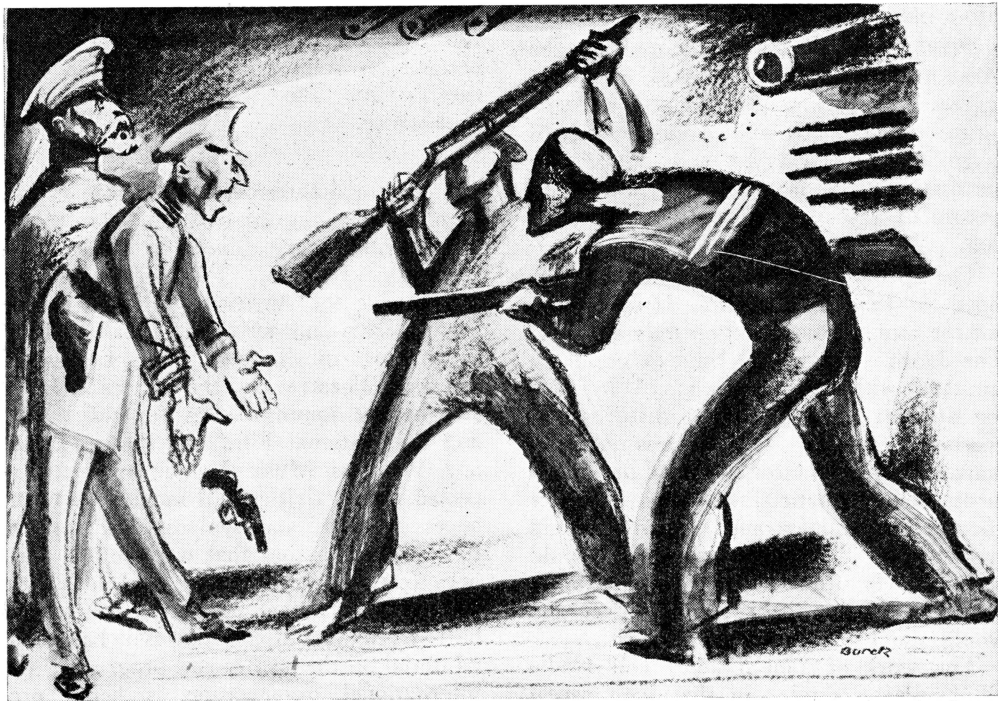
Certain technical considerations must arise in any historical production. One is to recreate an acute feeling of the mood and temper of the period. *Jayhawker* did it until the Lewises turned their play into a stale, political lampoon. It is totally lacking in Melvin Levy's play.

This mood is not a matter of costume, scenery or topical references. Partly, it depends upon recreating the rhythms of speech and gestures of the time. It is even more important to project clearly the prevalent emotional temper which, depending upon whether we are dealing with a period of ascending, expanding economy or of decline—and with one class or the other—resolves itself into optimism, scepticism, pessimism or cynicism, defeatism or revolutionary faith. In the case of *Gold Eagle Guy*, the mood is that of physical excitement, of surface melodrama.

In other words, the question is, when writing a historical drama, whether his-



Jacob Burck sees *Sailors of Cattaro*



Jacob Burck sees Sailors of Cattaro

tory or melodramatics should be allowed to color the play.

Because of the length of time it covers, *Gold Eagle Guy* should also give a sense of change of historic moods, and motivate that change clearly through the up and down swing of the economic factors. The sense of the direction of economic change would have created dramatic unity as well. Historical forces are too complex to be represented by a single character. In a play dealing with such a long and important period, we have a right to expect a whole gallery of significant figures, clearly individualized, and at the same time clearly revealing their class basis. They should have grown and developed with the play, to show the change in class relationships over a period of forty-four years.

In this way a true and dramatic panorama of history could have been created. And it should have widened as capitalism expanded, as Guy Button's power affected more and more lives. Instead, the play narrows as it proceeds, presenting fewer and less protagonists and creating an increasing social vacuum around Guy Button. The result is episodic, fragmentary, and as a whole, static.

The same confusion prevailed in the production as in the writing. The Group Theatre gave the play a sumptuous, sensuous scenic background. It is only too bad that the settings are totally out of keeping with the style of writing of the play. For its romantic violence, for its purple passages, for its treatment of the tender passion, the XIXth century theatre of wings and painted backdrops would have furnished the proper background. Donald Oenslager's sets, imaginative and magnificently theatrical as they are, seem therefore, in their relation to the script, to partake somewhat of the nature of some of Rube Goldberg's less fantastic inventions. The staircase of scene three serves no dramatic purpose; we begin to feel as the long scene drags that this set is ostentatious and its use in poor taste.

The failure to make full use of the settings in scenes two and four points to ideological confusion as well. The designer provided four distinct levels in the set. To a revolutionary, the street level should have been the most important. On the level could have appeared the whole, varied turbulent life of 'Frisco. Instead of which, Lee Strasberg plants a few dumb figures: a couple of Chinese, a prostitute, a harmonica-playing seaman. Nothing of significance, dramatically or socially, happens on that street.

SAILORS OF CATTARO, on the other hand, is not only a great play but a powerful revolutionary document. A story of a revolt that ended in defeat, the clear, revolutionary understanding of Friedrich Wolf turned it into an exultant affirmation of faith. Wolf did not need to distort history or to falsify character—or to strain after melodramatic riot. Given an intensely dramatic situation, he has

found simple, at times even homely, truthful scenes to develop and to resolve it. Because he is a true revolutionist who clearly understands history, he has written one of the first great epics of the working class.

Sailors of Cattaro is not acutely faced with the need to recreate an historical mood. The experience of the World War is a part of the indelible memory of a great many of us. But because its material is history, the play had to face some of the same problems as *Gold Eagle Guy*.

To make that history significant and vivid Friedrich Wolf has let every class and every man speak for himself. There is heroism and weakness on both sides; these people are not puppets or abstractions. But they transcend their meaning as individuals: captain, lieutenant, ensign, mate or sailor, they become the prototypes of their class; their virtues and their faults are more than personal qualities.

Here, however, is where Tom Powers' interpretation of the leading role—because it failed to understand the scope of Rasch's character and presented him only as a confused individual in a situation beyond his control—did a grave injustice to the revolutionary meaning of the play.

This misinterpretation must also have been in the director's mind and in that

of the adaptor. Faced by what they thought was a defeatist note, they sought to bolster the revolutionary tone of the last scenes by making the ensign and the flyer into militant, class-conscious workers. This attempt fails because the play is too intimately bound up with the essence of Franz Rasch.

In the German script, Franz is not a weak vacillating figure. If he fights for leaving the decision in the hands of the Sailors' council, it is because of his revolutionary faith in the masses. If the masses are defeated, it is only a temporary setback: "We'll do it better next time!"

The departure of the flyer and the ensign in the play can then be again what it is in the original script—not a last revolutionary attempt, but a defection to save their necks.

As to the Theatre Union's production: in my first review, I stressed its physical shortcomings. I did an injustice to the play, having seen it at a rough and unfinished preview. The production by now, two weeks after the opening performance, has lost its ragged edges; the acting and the direction have become surer and more decisive. And *Sailors of Cattaro* emerges as the most significant of the three plays which the Theatre Union has presented to date—and the best that New York has seen in many years.

Books Received

Six Soviet Plays, compiled and edited by Eugene Lyons, with a preface by Elmer Rice. Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass. \$3.00. "Theatre is a weapon" and the Soviet playwrights use it skilfully. Although the six plays included in this volume are hardly representative of the breadth and depth of Soviet dramaturgy, there is scarcely a theme that is not touched by the Soviet dramatists. *Bread* by Kirshon deals with the problem of winning over the peasants to the program of collective farming, and *Tempo* by Pogodin pictures the muzhiks striving to transform themselves from feudal serfs to modern industrial workers capable of surpassing even "American tempo." *Squaring the Circle*, an uproarious farce-comedy by Kataev, presents the amusing domestic complications of two young communist couples who are forced to share a single room on their honeymoon due to the housing shortage. Glebov's *Inga* deals with the emancipated Soviet woman, contrasts her place in the new and the old world, and touches upon the problems of the new family, love, and everyday domestic existence in a collective society. Afinogenov's *Fear* treats of the problem of the adjustment of the individualistic intellectuals to a revolutionary mass civilization. *The Days of the Turbins* by Bulkarov gives a sympathetic portrayal of the plight of the White Guards caught between the forces of Petliura and the Red Army, symbolic of the old society and the new. These plays are of genuine interest to American readers, and deserving of serious study by American playwrights.

The Mighty Barnum—a Screen Play by Gene Fowler and Bess Meredith. Covici-Friede, N. Y. C. \$2.00. The first screen play ever published in book form.

Judgment Day. A Melodrama in Three Acts, by Elmer Rice Coward-McCann, New York, \$2.00. We refer our readers to the review of the play by Ben Blake in the November issue.

How Do You Do, Sir, A Collection of One Act Plays, by Alfred Kreymborg. Samuel French. \$1.00. Whether it is two old women gossiping about their children in *I'm Not Complaining* or a scene between two down and out cripples in *Limping Along*, Alfred Kreymborg brings his characters to life with dialogue that is sometimes poetic, sometimes gutter-talk, but always lively and convincing. However, with the exception of *America, America*, Kreymborg hardly probes beneath the surface of his themes. Admitted that it is difficult to give dramatic life to any important subject in a five-minute playlet, Kreymborg could with a word here and a gesture there bind his people into the turmoil of the life about them, and show at least a few of them fighting for a way out of their misery. We hope that this master of the short play form will write more plays of the quality of *America, America* for performance by the workers theatres.

With A Reckless Preface: Two Plays by John Howard Lawson. Farrar and Rinehart, N. Y. C. \$2.50. The reckless preface, in which Lawson emphasizes his belief in the revolutionary theatre and his low opinion of the Broadway critics, is certainly inferior to the quality of the plays. Lawson's dialogue is brilliant. He writes the language of the people who are his subjects and it rings true. The plays are memorable, and you don't forget them or their characters, but they are confused in their delivery of the author's underlying thoughts and are not of great interest to a revolutionary audience. Both plays contain what Engels and Piscator call the "demoralization value" of a kind of writing that is an important subsidiary to revolutionary writing in that it pictures the breakdown of capitalist society and ideas. Lawson's swift ideological development since his recent active and courageous participation in the revolutionary movement, together with his outstanding talent, gives us reason to believe he will soon write a fine revolutionary play.

The Movie Front

THE Hearst press has fired a heavy load of printed powder in support of the Legion of Decency movement for federal and state censorship of films, which will be taken up in the coming Congress.

In its issue of December 1st, the Hearst *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, devotes a leading editorial to what it considers to be the "communist" trend in Hollywood production: "If motion pictures are to be used for Communistic propaganda, it will not be long before the American government will have to step in to censor and suppress such propaganda and directly to supervise the film companies responsible for it and see that they are conducted on a patriotic American basis."

This broadside in defense of the position of the Legion of Decency serves once more to emphasize the growing danger of the movement favoring federal censorship of films. After a slight relapse during the summer months, the Legion, with the powerful backing of the Hearst press, is again on the upsurge.

The Church vs. Movie Magnate skirmish can best be understood by an examination of the economic and political situation in which both these institutions of social control find themselves:

1. The unabated economic crisis that plunged the entire movie industry into financial bankruptcy, into receivership and control by the banks.
2. The unprecedented advance in political guidance over the industry by the Federal Government since the N.R.A.
3. The current Hollywood product which is motivated by the necessities of the Government and the movie magnates: A. *Escape Films*—including mystery, animal, historical and sex films (which may or may not clash with the moral codes of the religious institutions), presented as a cheap and easy way out of the pressing every-day problems of the movie masses. B. *Social and Political "problem" films*—including jingoistic, anti-labor, pro-war and pro-fascist films (which do not clash with the moral codes of the religious institutions), presented as a guide for the capitalist way out of the pressing problems of the masses.
4. The loss in movie attendance (over 65% since 1929) due to the economic crisis and to the fact that movie goers are rejecting the movie product.
5. The economic and political factors operating in the movie industry function likewise in the Church, resulting in a closer union between the Church and Government in the interest of the capitalist class as a whole. For instance, the use of Church leaders in leading strike-breaking arbitration posts.

The Church vs. Movie skirmish is a struggle for retrieving membership to both Church and the Movie, a struggle to achieve social stability, a struggle to win the great masses of moviegoers to the program of American capitalism. Thus the skirmish is centered around the question—"What kind of soporifics and ideas shall be presented to this restless movie audience?"

THIS question is answered in the Black and White lists issued by the Detroit and Chicago Catholic Churches. These lists reveal that the Bishops differ amongst themselves as to which films shall be disapproved. They cannot agree on the indecency of *Bulldog Drummond*; *Hell Cat*; *Melody in Spring*; *Embarrassing Moments*, etc., but they can agree on what are decent films. And these decent films happen to be the most flagrantly anti-labor, jingoistic and pro-war of the current season! *Merry Frinks*; *Friends of Mr. Sweeney*; *British Agent*; *Stand Up and Cheer*; *No Greater Glory*; etc.

The history of the friction between the Church and Movie shows, unfailingly, a greater concentration of jingoistic, anti-labor pro-war films after each campaign, during the last 25 years. Concurrently, and as result of these campaigns there has been extended a system of city, state and unofficial censorship. For example the creation of State Censor Boards in six states; appointment of Will Hays by President Harding to the self-censoring apparatus of the industry, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association; assumption of the right to censor by the police departments of every city.

The guiding codes in all these censorship bodies refer not only to immorality or indecency, but in the main to films that "incite to riot," "capital vs. labor," "disturb the peace," "films that show disrespect for officers of the law." And while the crusaders of today state that these codes have failed to keep the screen clean, nevertheless the codes have proved politically effective in the interests of the capitalist class. The crusaders are now interested in extending censorship, despite the fact that censorship is an abrogation of the rights allegedly guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the U. S. Constitution.

The main drive of the decency campaign may therefore be considered the drive for law and order films as the main diet of the movie audience, to be insured by whipping up sentiment for federal film censorship. This drive is being coordinated in Washington by Mrs. August Belmont of the Motion Picture Research Council, a body composed of Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, President Roosevelt's mother, A. Lawrence Lowell and other reactionary figureheads. William Randolph Hearst's unsuccessful attempt to stop production of Walter Wanger's *President Vanishes*, which according to Henry C. Fleisher of the Federated Press "summarizes the causes of modern wars" and shows "how capitalists utilize a fascist army for their own ends and the manner in which the press bows before the dictates of the commanders of industry," has endeared him infinitely closer this year to the program of the Legion of

Decency which has accepted him into the fold with open arms.

BECAUSE this decency campaign is against the best interests of the workers both in and out of the movie industry, the National Film and Photo League calls upon all movie goers, all movie workers, all workers organizations to reject the program of the Legion of Decency, and in doing so to reject the program of Hollywood. The decency campaign must not be permitted to subject us to movies dedicated to jingoism, anti-labor, pro-fascism and pro-war. The decency campaign and its sponsors must not be permitted to plunge us into fascist-like abrogation of the rights of assemblage, speech and press—that is, into a system of Federal Film Censorship.

Expose and boycott the anti-labor, pro-war, jingo films endorsed by the Legion of Decency! Fight against all forms of capitalist film censorship! Build film societies, forums, Guilds, affiliated with the Film and Photo League.

Support the production of workers films, independent of Hollywood, the Church and the Government.

Build a genuine independent film movement that will fight for the right of movie audiences to be the sole democratic censors of films.

DAVID PLATT

Epic of the Ether

(Continued from Page 14)

Red Square: The monument to Minnin and Pojarski, nationalistic heroes of Czarist Russia, has been removed from the center of the square and placed nearer to St. Basil's Cathedral. The Kremlin Wall behind the Mausoleum has been painted white, providing a fitting background for the green foliage of the trees growing on the graves of revolutionary fighters buried alongside the wall. Among these is the grave of John Reed.

This is the most honored burial place in the Soviet Union. Here you can find the urns of the three stratosphere flyers who reached a height of 22,000 meters; the urns of Clara Zetkin, Sen Katayama, Dovgalevski. . . .

THUS from celebration to celebration, in the way every epic tale grows from generation to generation, the subject matter of our broadcast is enriched by new features, though the main outline remains unchanged. The *dramatis personae* of our story are strikingly original: cities, collective farms, plants, military units. Words of prominent people provide the lyrical insertions, while models and diagrams of achievements, carried like placards over the heads of millions, are the materialized embodiment of their dreams, will and spirit. *Translated by LEON RUTMAN*

SHIFTING SCENES

News of the Workers Theatres

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: More and better Workers Theatre Groups! As a beginning: new groups have been organized or are in the process of organizing in the following cities:

Houston, Texas; Berkeley, Cal.; Seattle, Wash.; St. Paul, Minn.; Des Moines, Ia.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Wauwatosa, Wis.; Madison, Wis.; Peoria, Ill.; Chicago, Ill.; Ann Arbor, Mich.; Marquette, Mich.; Cincinnati, Ohio; Mansfield, Ohio; Washington, D. C.; Baltimore, Md.; Norfolk, Va.; Harrisburg, Pa.; Farrell, Pa.; Allentown, Pa.; Malden, Mass.

All these groups have written to us, most of them requesting repertory and organizational advice. All of them report the work they have done so far (which is more than some of our older groups do). Greetings to the newcomers! And to all of the groups, new and old: don't forget to include in your New Year's resolutions the one to report regularly and to use NEW THEATRE as your organizer by getting it into the hands of everybody you can possibly reach. Get subs, sell NEW THEATRE to your friends, and to your audiences!

NEW YORK, N. Y.

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD by the New Theatre Group (Neue Theater Gruppe) was the German Cabaret Night on Dec. 15, held at their new headquarters, a studio at 240 E. 80th St. The interesting program was made up of songs, both satirical and serious, and recitations by individual performers of the group and the German Proletarian Youth Group, and a mass recitation by the NTG. The highlight of the evening was, no doubt, the minute when excited voices were heard from the entrance, a member of the group refusing admission to someone. The audience, all on edge, expecting a visit from some of Yorkville's Nazis, moves, ready for defense, some jump up. The voice of the chairman: "please, everybody stay seated, keep discipline," helped little. Someone whispers in his ear, everybody waits. Here comes the news: "a member of the Friends of the New Germany wants to address this audience, a very high functionary at that, should we give him the floor for a few minutes?" The audience, all set, shouts: "Yes." And in marches, in full dress, Hitler himself! The audience relaxes, starts shouting and booing, and—the play begins. The illusion was so perfect that even members of the group, hardboiled and used to stage tricks, fell for this one. The audience was drawn into participation so much that after the program was officially over, nobody started dancing, but the audience took over the program with songs and recitations. The evening proved that the group in the short period of its existence, has managed to take root in Yorkville. It has already an audience organization, The Friends of the New Theatre Group, which gives it a firm basis.

ON THE MARCH is a twelve minute play created collectively by the Theatre of the Workers School. The plot was thrashed out by the group, then improvised, and the speeches set—and the result is a play which, though it has some crudities, is above the average in dramatic interest and human dialogue. It shows Hunger Marchers camping overnight in a field. The sheriff tries to put them out, but the farmer who owns the land (until his mortgage is foreclosed) defends them. The improvisational rehearsals gave the actors freedom and assurance. They must follow this artistic line further, and it will lead them to completely real characters, and past the possibility of forcing quick conversions, like that of the farmer.



Drawing by Phillip Reisman

THE INTENSIFIED PROGRAM of the Workers International Relief for the establishment of cultural units, has already been realized in part. The Workers Animated Film reports that all preliminary work for T. Johnson's *Rugged Racketeerism* is completed and filming will begin in January. The Social Repertory Theatre, a project for a permanent company producing full length plays, is revising Hallie Flanagan's *Can You Hear Their Voices* for production. Lou Polan will direct. Three neighborhood dance groups are already functioning, and three more will begin work shortly.

THE JEWISH DRAMA SECTIONS pay a lot of attention to training. Right now, a director's class with thirty-five students, led by J. Mestel, and a class in playwriting with ten students, led by O. Shapiro, is being held regularly. Five of the sections are busy rehearsing plays; the Brownsville group which has doubled its membership, is working on six plays at a time. A newcomer is the Allerton group with twenty members.

AN IMPORTANT TRAINING COURSE for directors of workers theatres is announced by the New York section of the L. O. W. T. Six weeks of intensive training in basic problems of directing and acting will be offered to one member to be selected by each group. The fee is nominal and the quality of the course is superior to that of most high priced "schools of the theatres". Non-members of the L.O.W.T. will be admitted upon presentation of qualifications, for a reasonable fee. There will be two meetings a week, since the members of the course will all be spending the major part of their time with their own groups. The course is planned to give concrete help in raising the artistic level and speeding the output of effective plays by the theatres.

THE BOOKING BUREAU, in charge of Bob Riley, is becoming the clearing center for all requests for performances. Theatres should send him monthly reports on the material they have ready for showings, besides announcements of all performances with date and place. Anyone interested in securing repertory, speakers, or the service of a director should also write, 114 W. 14th St. The office will be open Monday and Thursday evenings.

NEWARK, N. J.

Since its separation from the Jack London Club about three months ago, the group, now called Jack London Theatre, has been going forward steadily. New headquarters at 2 Shipman St., a monthly bulletin *Dram Bullit*, new members, a combined affair with the YCL, and a symposium on "What Our Theatre Is Doing" are some of the recent achievements. This report from the group on the symposium should open the eyes of some of our groups as to the effectiveness of this phase of work. "... with the symposium, the J.L.T. made a move which is destined to affect the theatrical situation among Newark Little Theatres. A capacity audience

drawn from the membership of many groups, filled the theatre, to hear speakers from the Dana College Mimmers, Y.W.C.A., Little Theatre Guild, Martmart Players, and the Jack London Theatre. Following the talks a very interesting discussion took place on the relationship between all of these groups and the contemporary scene. The evening closed with performances by our Theatre of Action which did a lot to illustrate our point of view. . . ." Bookings are plentiful. *America, America* is still popular and the *New Scottsboro* shows considerable promise. With *Newsboy* and its various other skits and songs, the theatre is now able to provide complete evenings of entertainment. Casting is going on now for the next full length play *Gods Of The Lightning*. Bob Riley of the L.O.W.T., N.Y.C. will assist with the production.

PITTSBURGH, PA.

In this town of steel kings with magnificent estates and steel workers with their cold, barren flats, the Workers Theatre, for the first time in the history of Pittsburgh, arranged a full evening of entertainment. And it was a successful evening. Some of the audience came from as far as twenty miles away. A film showing, a puppet show, and *Hollywood Goes Red* made up the program. The puppet show *Me and God*, written by the group's director, E. Shapiro, was the big hit of the evening.

BOSTON, MASS.

Five letters from five members of the New Theatre Players in one week! And all of them reporting fast progress of the group since its re-organization about six weeks ago. The various committees are functioning, classes in voice training, body movement, improvisations, and political classes are held regularly. They report: ". . . There is the beginning of a new spirit and a real decrease in our inefficiency, though there are still a few people who 'can't come' now and then. In time these will either work regularly, or not be included in the activities of the group, and we will be unencumbered by dead wood. There is a real development of artistic forces going on, with everyone giving all he or she knows.

DETROIT, MICH.

The Theatre of Action is near the head of the list in NEW THEATRE'S Circulation Drive. Sales were tripled this month. And what is more, they have a discussion each month about the magazine. The group has been performing more frequently of late before organizations not yet connected with the revolutionary movement.

GARY, IND.

After a slow summer and fall, the Workers Dramatic Club and the Elinden Youth Group have combined forces and are working on *Dimittroff*. The group will take the play to Detroit on New Year's Day at the invitation of the Bulgarian-Macedonian Workers Educational Society. The Club will join with the Youth section of the International Workers Order early in January in the production of a play for the I.W.O.

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

Terror or no Terror, writes our organizer on the West Coast, "we are determined to set up a strong centralized L.O.W.T. here. A Western Conference has been called for February, and will probably be held in San Francisco. Ben Meislin will be sent out on a tour to contact the West Coast groups. They should get in touch at once with the L.O.W.T. office, 212 Stimson Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal.

ANNE HOWE

From Agitprop to Realism

By BEN BLAKE

THE outstanding achievement of the Workers Laboratory Theatre of New York (WLT) has been its pioneer work in putting revolutionary dramatic material into popular American forms. The musical revue, the circus side-show, the torchlight election parade, the health medicine show, the World's Fair, have all been utilized. Side by side with these types, the WLT early developed the "agitprop" (agitation and propaganda) sketch and the stirring rhythms of the group recitation. These two strains—the one stressing lively physical movement, the other developing the dramatic power of the human voice—were blended last year to reach their culmination in *Newsboy*. Actors, constantly playing in these forms, developed into able caricaturists, satirists, comics, quick-witted and quick-limbed, but they had no opportunity to be come skilled in the basic dramatic style of realism.

With that beginning of the present season the WLT decided to turn to realism. *Jews at the Crossroads* by Lous Lantz and Oscar Saul, marks an advance over the clash of political abstractions that passed for realistic drama in the past. The dramatic situation itself is interesting and specific, but the play suffers from some of the usual faults. The opening scene consists wholly of talk to introduce the characters and situation. It drags, and the few points it makes could easily be written into later scenes. And, as usual, it is the militant worker who is least characterized. He is all of one piece—militancy—a one-sided "hero" of the Horatio Alger type stood on its political head. The boss is a sketchy but humanly believable character. Berenberg's interpretation of him was intelligent but suffered from physically timid projection.

The outstanding acting of the production was that of Ford in the role of the Nazi foreman. Here was no ranting Fascist maniac—though real life affords ample basis for such an "extreme" portrayal—but a quiet spoken, intense fanatic, intelligent for his purposes, and all the more deadly because so completely and stubbornly in earnest. All this was brought out by Ford's acting—his short, sharp movements, the hard, suppressed emotion in his voice, the constant tenseness in his face.

The direction, while it brought out the drama of the isolated clashes, was poor in continuity; no line of steadily rising interest to the final climax was created; after each lesser clash, interest had to be rebuilt. There was no reason in the opening scene for bringing the actors on stage from the audience. A number of crossings and recrossings were inexcusably awkward. There was a half-hearted attempt to merge an element of stylization (in the settings) with the essentially realistic production.

Hot Pastrami, by Oscar Saul, a puppet play performed in the recent elections, had its premiere with living actors—and proved to be an unexpected treat. The original play was a crude piece with most of the vices of the old agitprop sketch. There was definite improvement, though, in the better integration of the slogans, a limited characterization of the symbols, a few genuinely comic situations, and use of the popular melodies.

You would never recognize the script in the exuberant comedy of the present production. Directed by the youthful WLT veteran Alfred Saxe, it has the grandly comic spirit of the *commedia dell'arte*, a fantastic and yet logical whimsicality. There is bounding physical movement throughout, and the movement is almost always pointed—underscoring the satire or silliness or whimsicality of the particular speech or situation. There is hardly a line spoken but that has consequences in action, and vice versa. All three characters, (played by women), have a suggestion of toy dolls in make-up and movement. The girl Punch is a "natural" in the

part, with quick-witted, shrewd impudence, gay physical agility, and a flair for abrupt transition from moods of mischief to mock-seriousness. Certain passages of action, however, though good in themselves, are so long drawn out in relation to the whole that they weaken the line of general interest. A little careful pruning, and strengthening the ending, will make *Hot Pastrami* as fine a production in its sphere as *Newsboy* is in another.

IN *Daughter*, adapted by Peter Martin from Erskine Caldwell's story, the WLT has probably the best one-act play thus far created in the American workers theatre. It is a simple theme, simply developed. A southern tenant farmer, unable to bear his daughter's constant plea for food, has killed her. He goes to jail while a crowd of poor tenant farm folk look on. His wealthy landlord visits him in jail and offers to get him off if he will say he killed her because a Negro farmer who is organizing a sharecropper's union had raped her. The prisoner refuses. He declares it was the landlord who killed her by making it impossible for him to feed his daughter. The crowd of farm folk, who have been of varying opinions before, all agree as to the real guilt. The frightened landlord is protected by the sheriff. As the crowd advances, the sheriff fires. A farmer falls. The others pause, their faces grim. Then slowly, irresistibly, they continue their advance. This bare plot is clothed in rich, earthy dialogue, full of quaint, simple and apt images. It brings to mind that one-act classic of the little theatre, Synge's *Riders of the Sea*. Only here the tragedy, while inevitable, is portrayed in its vital social aspects, and thus is related to the lives of the audience.

Daughter makes high demands on the shock troupe actors, and most of them respond well. The stiff-limbed old farmer, the God-fearing cowardly old woman with a drawl strung out like molasses, the militant young farmer, played by Bruskin without exaggerated heroics, the sheriff,—were all solidly created by the actors with a dramatic restraint that rang true. The landlord was too conventionally the "southern colonel" type. The crowd was poorly handled in the beginning where it served as a chorus. The note of tragic horror was very weak, and the patterns of the earlier groupings were broken. Later, the action rose steadily and surely to its climax. The grouping of the opposing forces were definite and dramatic. Shifting the position of the jail wall each time the door was opened enlarged the area of the cell interior when the action was inside (so that the audience got a sense of identity with the prisoner, inside looking out) and when the center of action shifted to the crowd outside, the device enlarged the outside area (influencing the audience to identify itself with the crowd). The fine idea was marred in execution by the clumsiness of the door.

The simple and powerful ending of the play illustrates how realism, when its elements are socially representative, becomes at its profoundest level, symbolic. The small group of farmers advancing on the landlord and armed sheriff are a portent of the world's masses advancing everywhere against their exploiters.

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To New Theatre:

Perhaps the most provocative event of the past month to all theatre workers was the case of the *Baby Mine* company. They had been sent on a tour of the C.C.C. camps by C.W.A., which assumed responsibility for their food, lodging, and transportation. At one camp they had to wait in the rain for three hours for a transportation truck. Breakfast was refused there. At another, they were quartered in the camp infirmary with a sick patient, supplied with soiled linen and no blankets. They protested such incidents directly to the stage manager and company supervisor, Eugene MacGregor, and, since they considered his inefficiency and negligence responsible for the conditions they were experiencing, they also appealed over his head. For answer, MacGregor warned the company that he had authority to say they would be fired if they continued to protest.

Saturday, November 17, members of the cast were notified that they were no longer on the relief rolls—because the playwright, Margaret Mayo, had withdrawn the rights to the play.

The next day members of the Actors Emergency Association met with the ex-cast to map a fight for their reinstatement, since it was plain that the reason alleged for the dismissal was only an excuse. The newspaper reports and the gossip about the case have served only to confuse the real issue in the fight. A plain history may clarify it:

November 19. Col. Earle Boothe, head of the Drama Works Division told the actors that their complaints had had no bearing upon their dismissal; they were dropped solely because the author withdrew her play.

Nov. 20. The Council of Actors' Equity heard a delegation of Equity and A.E.A. members, and passed a resolution to send a protest to Col. Boothe asking immediate reinstatement of the company. That night Miss Mayo explained to an A.E.A. meeting that she had asked to have the play withdrawn several weeks before it was done (because she felt that royalties should be paid), but that she refused to have her action serve as an excuse to deprive needy actors of relief. She dispatched a telegram to the C.W.A., giving them permission to use *Baby Mine* another six months, provided the original cast was retained.

Nov. 21. Confronted with this action, Col. Boothe explained that he had begun plans for another production whose cast would fill the relief rolls, so *Baby Mine* could not be revived. [This was only four days after it had closed.] He intimated that such a production plan once started, could not be abandoned. But plans have been started and dropped before in his office.

Nov. 22. Paul Turner, Equity Counsel, repeated to an Equity member that Col. Boothe had told him "We had many complaints from that company and wanted to get rid of them."

Nov. 27. Equity Council met and heard Mr. Frank Gilmore read signed statements secured by relief officials from other C.C.C. players (who must have felt it wiser to sign when asked) on the subject of their considerate receptions on tour. Meanwhile a delegation to present the case of the *Baby Mine* company was waiting to testify, but was never called. Mr. Gilmore issued a statement that the charges against the C.C.C. camps could not be sustained after "investigation."

Nov. 28. A meeting of C.W.A. actors was called "to show our appreciation of our officials" and whitewash the C.C.C. camps. The picture of actors calling a meeting to rejoice over having relief jobs becomes credible if you imagine the official pressure upon them. Those who at-

tended the meeting however, went on record to the effect that conditions in the camps were generally acceptable *except in the cases listed by the Baby Mine company, and that the other companies did not wish to pass judgement on this one.*

Dec. 4. Fifty Equity actors signed a petition (sponsored by the A.E.A.) demanding that the Council reopen the case. Equity set a date for hearing.

Later the Equity Council refused definitely to carry on the fight for these actors—who were cut off from relief jobs because they dared to complain of gross mistreatment. If the story ends here other actors may be fired for the same reason—or in fear of firing, submit to intolerable conditions. It is a challenge to fundamental American principles, and the Actors Emergency Association is determined to do what should really be Equity's function—to carry on the fight for those C.W.A. actors.

A MEMBER OF ACTORS EMERGENCY ASSOCIATION

DANCERS UNION

To New Theatre:

Artists have had their garrets and dancers their basement studios. At least, they used to have these bare quarters in which to dance or teach until the economic crisis swept them, together with thousands of other artists, into the ranks of the jobless, the unemployed, the homeless. In the apportioning of relief to professional workers, dancers have been almost without exception overlooked, despite the fact that dancing teachers and performers of all types have been requested by schools and settlements.

Cognizant of these facts, a small group of dancers calling themselves the Provisional Committee for Unemployment Relief for Dancers met and announced a meeting for all dancers interested in this project. A letter was also written to leading dancers inviting them to the meeting and asking them to speak about their contact with needy dancers and the general lack of facilities for dance work. A CWA official was sounded on the attitude of his staff toward an extension of government-supported dance activity, especially in the field of performing groups, and he stated that the CWA staff eagerly awaited such performing units.

On November 23rd, approximately thirty dancers, including Fe Alf and Tamiris, attended the first meeting. The plans for dance relief were discussed at length, and suggestions and criticisms of the tentative demands drawn up by the provisional committee were offered. A name was chosen by vote for the organization: Dancers' Union. An executive committee of ten

honorary and five active members was elected, a leaflet drawn up to be sent to interested individuals and posted at dance studios, and the date of the second meeting set.

The demands of the Dancers Union are:

1. Jobs for dancers, dance teachers, etc. in CWA projects.
2. Jobs for performing units of dancers in CWA projects.
3. A central theatre of dance where performing units are salaried to put on dance programs regularly.
4. Establishment of more schools resembling the Unit of Drama, Music and Dance at 117 West 46th Street.
5. Immediate cash relief for needy cases.

On December 20th, the second meeting was held at Tamiris' studio to discuss methods for obtaining these demands, and to elect a grievance committee and spokesman to present these demands to the proper relief authorities. A concert and dance were also planned to receive the delegates when they returned.

Such activity on the part of dancers sounds a progressive note in this profession. A militant organization of dancers can procure immediate relief and aid for the unemployed. It can also establish a much-needed unity among dancers in all fields, which can work for the raising of standards all along the line. All dancers, unemployed or otherwise, are urged to support the Dancers Union.

FRANCIS BORDINE
Secretary of The Dancers Union

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BACKSTAGE

Despite a potential audience of thousands, only two hundred people assembled to see the Midwest Theatre Festival held in Chicago on November 28. The performances suffered from hasty preparation and demonstrated the need for artistic development of the participating groups, and the need to reach larger audiences among the unpoliticalized workers and middleclass as well as those already sympathetic to these revolutionary theatres. The first step in this direction will be to recruit professional and little theatre workers for their support and educational activity. The second is already under way—the reorganization of the Midwest section of the LOWT. At this writing reports indicate a new vitality in the Chicago section. All Chicago workers theatres are giving effective support to the Drama Union, a professional group that was active in bringing Theatre Union's *Stevadore* to Chicago. Although the conference was hastily and therefore badly prepared, the errors that were made were useful in bringing into the open weaknesses that otherwise might have been overlooked. The fine-spirited cooperation that exists among the Chicago groups, and the reorganization of the section with a broader program that grew out of the conference give promise that these groups will forge ahead rapidly. Only two weeks after the unsuccessful Festival, the Chicago Workers Theatre under the direction of M. Feder gave fine performances of Nadier's *Troops Are Marching*, and a new and highly effective musical review *The Capitalist Follies of 1934* before full audiences at the John Reed Club Hall. The Workers Laboratory Theatre proved "theatre is a weapon" by dramatizing a vicious attack on Negro rights—the eviction of Herbert Newton and his family.

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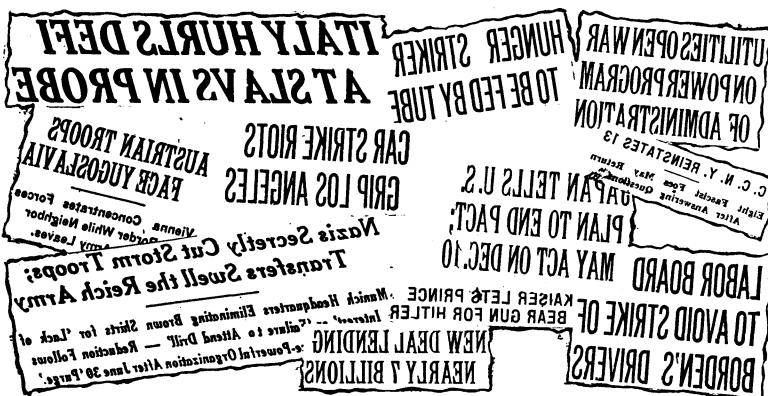
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